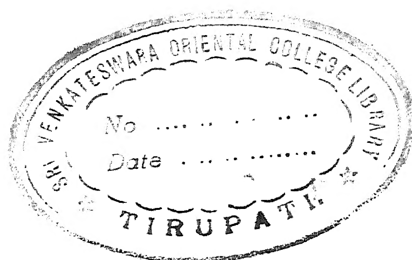
EXCERPTS FROM POTANA'S BHAGAVATAM



Excerpts from Potana's Bhagavatam

BY

A. V. S. SARMA



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SKANDA



FOREWORD

I deem it a great honour and privilege to be asked to write a Foreword to an English rendering of the most sacred, inspiring and devotional piece of Telugu Literature (Potana's Bhagavatam). Bammera Potana is a poet of acknowledged greatness in Telugu and is also a great Rama Bhakta and he has laid posterity under a deep debt of gratitude by his rendering of the Sanskrit Bhagavatam into lucid Telugu verse. The translation of Bhagavatam into any other language has not even been attempted. The endeavour made by Dr. A. V. S. Sarma to render this great work into English is therefore very laudable and he has certainly done great service to the English knowing public to understand and appreciate the great spirit of Bhakthi expounded by Potana. As Potana has put it, it is Lord Sri Ramachandra that has given expression to his writing of the great Bhagavatam and not himself. So it is, I believe, that it is the great devotion and Bhakthi of Dr. A. V. S. Sarma that has given expression to the "Excerpts from Potana's Bhagavatam".

Dr. A. V. S. Sarma is a practising physician at Madras and has to his credit professional publications of recognition. He has also been a literary writer since his student days. His collection of poems "Flowerets from shrubs" has earned for him recognition as an undergraduate of the College. Subsequently he wrote "Lines of Devotion" and this work won praise from no less a poet and critic than late Dr. James H. Cousins. He said: "I have as you

desire, perused it with the interest of a fellow-worker in verse, and congratulate you on your industry and skill."

Dr. Sarma is known to me for many years and he has showed great aptitude towards devotional literature and has accomplished something remarkable through this present book "Excerpts from Potana's Bhagavatam".

I have gone through some portions of the book and I have nothing but appreciation for the same. I refer particularly to the passages dealing with Dhruva, Prahlada, Gajendra, Vamana, Sri Rama, description of Sri Krishna's sport, particularly Rasa Krida, Jalakrida, and description of the autumn season, Rukmini's Kalyanam, Kuchela; Sruti Gita and Markandeya, which are worth reading by every Bhaktha and student of literature and also philosophy.

In conclusion I congratulate the author on his achievement and I have no doubt that the public would welcome this beautiful piece of devotional literature and we can eagerly look forward for many more of such publications to inspire devotion and Bhakthi in this materialistic age.

8-12-56,
MADRAS.

P. SURYANARAYANA.

EXCERPTS FROM POTANA'S BHAGAVATAM

INTRODUCTION

The epic of Bhagavatam illuminates the world eternally. Brahma taught his son Narada the Bhagavata purana. Sage Narada spread it to Vyasa who in turn gave it to his son Suka. Suka narrated the same to King Parikshit in the last seven days of the latter's repentant living.

Bhagavatam sings the glory of God. It is generally respected and particularly worshipped in several houses. The great purana steers the readers from the material to the spiritual plane. The text runs in the form of discourses. Sri Krishna is almost everywhere in the text. The stories about the Pandavas and the Kauravas and a description of Sri Rama adorn at appropriate places.

To clear the mind of the clouding desires, to follow the righteous path, to realise the necessity and achievements of the avatars of the Lord, to avert the sin accruing in Kaliyuga by singing the praises of Him, and to reach the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord are all discussed in an inimitable way by the great poet Potana.

The existence of God is realised. The vedic lore explains the universe in terms of Sankhya principles. The Advaita—, Vishistadvaita—, and Dvaita—systems of thought explain each in its own way the relationship between the universe and its Creator. The universe stands emphasised as the means of realising Him, through vedic rites and devotion.

The avatars of the Supreme being are :— 1. Varaha, 2. Yajna, 3. Kapila, 4. Dattatreya, 5. The Kumaras, 6. Nara and Narayana, 7. Dhruva, 8. Prithu, 9. Rishabha, 10. Hayagriva, 11. Matsya, 12. Kurma, 13. Narasimha, 14. Hari, 15. Vamana, 16. Hamsa, 17. Manvantara purusha, 18. Dhanvantari, 19. Mohini, 20. Parasurama, 21. Sri Rama, 22. Balarama and Krishna, 23. Vyasa, 24. Buddha, 25. Kalki, 26. Other rishis and gods with His aspects.

The avatar as Krishna appeals to every one. As a child, youth, victorious conqueror, householder, and king of kings, Sri Krishna entranced all that came in contact with Him. The Pandavas, Bhishma, and the Gopas and Gopi women realised Him as the Lord and their love was divine. The adoration of Him by Dharmaraja is worth remembering by every reader.

Potana the pious poet, created Bhagavatam in Telugu and like Saint Tyagaraja, dedicated the

work to Sri Rama. Thus the poet lives for ever like the saint.

The massive magnitude, sustained sweetness, and dignified diction, in the shape of peaceful prose and profuse poetry, and last but not the least the deep devotion permeating the epic of Bhagavatam built by the Godly hands of Potana are things that an advanced student of learning, literary and philosophical, can understand, appreciate and adore with a pure heart.

As a school boy, I read the passages from Potana's Bhagavatam dealing with the salvation of Gajendra, the realisation of God by Dhruva and Prahlada, the 'swayamvara' of Rukmini, the story of Bali, and the sport of Sri Krishna in Brindavana. As a result a silent inspiration arose in me with an inherent force, but was kept under voluntary restraint for over thirty years. The idea of conveying some of the passages of the original into English language pressed and possessed me long; and now I venture to record my work with prayers at the feet of Bammera Potana who carved out the edifice of Bhagavatam in Telugu.

Bhagavatam is set with the highest ideals of devotion knowledge and salvation (vide Sruti Gita; Narada's advice to Vasudeva; Sri Krishna's initiation of Uddhava). Narratives are many and enchanting and drive home these ideals.

My aim is that those knowing English and not Telugu may realise to some extent what this great Telugu poet Potana has conveyed through his Bhagavatam to the world. Telugu is sweetest in Bhagavatam. What I have achieved will remain a humble attempt; and the defects and drawbacks will be many in the matter that has evolved due to a force inherent in the theme itself. My rendering is not a translation but is a record from the thoughts that have taken root in me after a reading of the great text which gives me a great solace at all times. Some portions of the great work have been chosen by me for my own rendering and the links of the stories have been to some extent preserved as in the original.

My wife has helped me by her constant encouragement in all my writings and my indebtedness to her has further increased by the preparation of this book.

The typescripts and proofs have been patiently and carefully read and corrected by my sons A. V. Nagarjuna Sarma, and A. V. Seetharama Sarma, and thus they have kindly helped me.

I am thankful to the Superintendent and others in the T. T. D. Press for their constant courtesy and uniform co-operation. The errata has kindly been prepared by my nephew Sri Dittacavi Sundararama Rao and to him my thanks are due for the same.

The publication of this book has been accomplished through the co-operation of the members of the Trust Board and the Executive Officer of the Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams organisation; and to all of them my thanks are due.

My special thanks are due to Sri P. Suryanarayana, Trustee, T. T. Devasthanams, Tirupati for having kindly written a 'Foreword'.

I have referred to the following books and utilised knowledge therefrom in some measure or other, and therefore I hereby record my indebtedness to the learned authors of the books.

1. SRIMADANDHRA BHAGAVATAM — Bammera Potanamatyapraneetamu—*Rayadurgam Narasimha Sastri*—(Messrs. Vavilla Ramaswami Sastrulu & Sons., Madras),

2. SRIMADANDHRA BHAGAVATAM — Bammera Potanamatyapraneetamu—*Vidwan Kallur Venkatasubrahmanya Dikshitulu*— (Messrs. Venkatrama & Co., 1947).

3. ANDHRA KAVULA CHARITRAM (PART–I)—*Rao Bahadur K. Viresalingam Pantulu*—(1937).

4. A STUDY OF BHAGAVATA PURANA or ESOTERIC HINDUISM—*Purnendu Narayana Sinha*—(1950).

5. SRIMAD BHAGAVATAM — (Translated into Easy English Prose)—*S. Subba Rau* Volumes I & II (1928).

4—1—1955
"VIJAYA DHWAJAM"
10, Bhagirathammal Street,
Madras-17.
(INDIA)

Akkaraju
Venkata subrahmanya Sarma.



LIFE OF POTANA

Potana was born (1405?) to a pious couple, Kesana and Lakkamamba, of a niyogi brahmin family belonging to Kaundinyasa Gothra. The poet lived in Bammera village, Warangal Hyderabad state, and did not have any rigid schooling or regular education. It is said that while tending cattle in the village, he wended into a nearby forest and had initiation into 'Ramamantra' by a sage Jitananda and thereafter acquired devotional knowledge and poetic genius. The writings of the great poet leave us in the conviction that Sri Rama's grace was with him ever and anon, and Veerabhadra Vijayam was but a pointer in this direction.

Pious poetry and chill penury went together with Potana who lived as an agriculturalist. Srinadha, the brother-in-law of the poet, was however worldly-wise having dedicated his works to the reigning rulers of the day and lived in affluence and luxury, and with royal patronage for a long time.

Potana dedicated his Bhagavata to Sri Rama and refused to offer his writing to any human creature. His idea was plain in the following:—

"*Immanujeswaradhamula.........jagaddhitambugan*".
No dedication shall go to the kings:
Mean mortal folk! No love of gifts and gold
Shall tempt to swell the frame that dies and meets
The brands of Lord of Justice down in hell!
This Potana shall dedicate to Ram
This Bhagavata, prayerful in piety!

"*Chetularanga sivuni...........kadupu chetu*"
The hands shall worship Siva full and well!
The mouth shall sing the praise of Hari high!
All truth and love shall stay in man at heart!
Else, mortals are but sins to parents pure!

It is recorded that the poet early in his life wrote 'Bhogini Dandakam' in respect of a royal demand characterising the concubine of the patron. K. VEERESALINGAM PANTULU accepts this possibility while CHILUKURI VEERABHADRA RAO refutes the same. A poet of such purity, suavity, and sanctity might not have stooped to the degradation attributed thus; and whether at all he did such a profane act, must stand seriously questioned. The patient bearing of life-long poverty is mighty proof of this great Andhra bard overcoming all weaknesses of the body and mind once and for all.

Once Srinadha set out to meet Potana and nearing the latter's village he asked his palanquin bearers to let go the support of the forearm of the palanquin which still carried on. Seeing this, Mallana, the son of Potana exclaimed in wonder to his father at the sight. The father advised his son, who was tilling the ground with a plough and bullocks in the fields nearby to release one bull and the plough ran as usual. Srinadha seeing this ordered the bearers of the rear arm also to let go the hold and demonstrated the palanquin carrying him in safety thereafter too. Now Potana advised his son to release the other bullock also from the plough which tilled as if nothing had happened. Seeing this Srinadha got down and greeted his brother-in-law and the nephew in a tone of derision: "Are the farmers doing well? To this Potana replied in verse on the spot:

" *Balarasala sala navapallava.........poshanardhamai.*"

To dedicate to a man a work
Of poetry, pious, pure, is making ov'r
A paragon of virgin beauty to
The hands impure, immoral and unchaste!
Thereby to feed, is not the path of right!
A poet may till the soil to live in joy
With wife and children and this path is right!

Srinadha advised Potana to dedicate a poetical work to a Carnataka king and live in plenty and happiness, and not to lead the hard life of a tiller of the soil. The entire party then adjourned to the humble residence of Potana. Srinadha and his entourage were requested to get ready for a dinner. There was nothing with the poet and Mallana went out and returned

with empty hands having tried in vain for a loan in the village. The pious poet immediately prayed solemnly to Saraswathi Devi, the Goddess of Learning, and She immediately answered the prayers by supplying an excellent range of sumptuous dinner from behind a curtain in the kitchen. The good wife of Potana served her brother and his retinue to their entire satisfaction. The distinguished visitor in some surprise and more adoration exclaimed to Potana: "O noble soul! Why suffer? Dedicate Bhagavata to a king and you will have all prosperity!" At this Goddess Saraswathi appeared before Potana with tears flowing down her cheeks. Potana exclaimed:

"*Katuka kanti neeru...........nammu Bharathi*"
O Goddess! great of learning and light!
Why art Thine eyes of lustre in tears, that run
To Thine bosom heaving with distress and grief?
I swear to Thee; I shall not sell Thine honour
To carnatic chiefs, heinous with crimes cold!

After these events Srinadha returned home, having failed in his mission. The honoured authorship of Telugu Bhagavata goes to Potana who wrote the immortal purana and refused to dedicate to Sarvajnasingabhupala, the ruler of Rachakonda. At this the king punished the poet by burying the classic· Sri Rama appeared to the king's wife in a dream and persuaded her to prevail upon her husband, and unearth the great epic, and proclaim it as a ruling force for the betterment of mankind and the universe. The ruler responding, the Bhagavata saw the light of the day though mutilated and partially destroyed by white ants. The leavesthat were destroyed, underwent rewriting by Gangaraju, Veligandala Naraya and Nerchuri Singana.

Potana, Sarvajnasingabhupala, and Srinadha appear to have been contemporaries, but this point is not universally acknowledged by critics.

It is said that Potana was poet laureate at Venkatagiri, but it appears sacrilegious even to entertain such an idea.

Potana wrote as per bid of Sri Rama and with His inspiration. It is ennobling to the young or growing or fruitful minds as a perennial flood of ambrosia from a divine, ennobling and enchanting source.

Srinadha commented adversely on the stanza "*Sirikin-cheppadu...........gaja pranavanochahiyai*"

Vishnu spoke not to His consort ; took none
Of army strong ; armed not with disc or conch
Or club : set not hair locks ; forgot the hold
Of veil ov'r bosom of Lakshmi whilst in
The rapturous sport of love but tore to save
Gajendra lock'd with crocodile in fight !

and said that no one coming to fight out a situation goes unarmed. Potana remembered the criticism and taught his brother-in-law a lesson. Once as Srinadha was having bath, Potana chose the opportunity and rolled a boulder into a nearby well producing a drowning noise and ran in haste and told his brother-in-law that his child had fallen into a well. Poor Srinadha ran almost naked to the spot. Then Potana said: "Where are the helpers? Where is the rope? Where is the well-diver to bring up the drowned boy?" Thereafter Srinadha realised the aptness of the composition of Potana and conceded all praise.

This great saint of pœts is unique in portraying every aspect of pœtry and any critic has but unique appreciation for the thought, composition, and effect contained in every mellifluous line of his work. Of all aspects, devotion has permeated the epic with such saturation, and any casual reader of even a random passage of the epic in Telugu will experience a peaceful mind evolving towards the Almighty.

Potana's description of Mohini before Lord Siva, and Rukmini emerging out of Durga's shrine; and Sri Krishna enlightening Akrura are achievements that he alone could evolve. Picturesque, apt and awe-inspiring are the pœtic renderings of the scenes throughout the text, and a few examples of the many such are seen in the court scene where Dhruva was insulted by his own father; the conversation between Dhruva and his mother; the prayers of Gajendra and Prahlada; the affectionate descent of Vishnu to help Gajendra ; the conversation between Vamana and Bali; the rejoicing of the people of Ayodhya at the return of Sri Ramachandra; the conversation between Sri Rama and his sons Lava and Kusa; the avatar of Sri Krishna and His sport at Vraja, Brindavana and Mathura;

the seasonal changes at Brindavana; the rasa- and jalakreeda of Sri Krishna; the lamentations of Gopiwomen; the humiliation of Indra; the killing of the asuras including Kamsa and Sisupala; the wedding of Sri Krishna with Rukmini Devi; Narada witnessing the sport of Krishna with His sixteen thousand queens; the love quarrel between Krishna and Rukmini; the warlike qualities of Satyabhama; the blissful proverty and spotless character of Kuchela; the initiation of Uddhava; the pathetic return of Sri Krishna into His own self; and the witnessing of the deluge by Markandeya. The description of Kaliyuga has a wealth of meaning and the remedy for the many ills is said to lie in chanting wholeheartedly the name of the supreme Lord. The philosophical bearing of the great work is a mine of knowledge. I have felt that the excellent commentaries on the original by many learned authors existing today are effectively educative, and I have but touched the mighty material in the simple and humble way of an ordinary worker and thinker and drowned in the depth of mundane existence.

Love in salvation and salvation in love are eminently balanced in abundance in the description of Sri Krishna. While Potana was writing the tenth Skanda, he went out into the paddy fields on a beautiful moonlit night and sat upon a stone on the bund of a canal and imagined himself to be a Gopika and realised Sri Krishna by singing "*Nallanivadu......... ledugadamma cheppare*".

Of hue blue, lotus-eyed, and with the head
Adorned with peacock-feather in the hair,
With smiles on face and raining love all round,
And He has stolen the wealth of lust of maids!
O plants with aroma sweet, tell us if He
Is hiding behind you in Godly sport!

It is said that while "*Alavaikunta purambulo............... sarambhiayai*",

There, in Vaikunta, abode of Vishnu,
Rests He on flowery bed, near banks of lake
Ambrosial in Mandara garden gay,
But heard the cry of elephant king low
In grief, as saviour sure, and charg'd earthward!

was being written, Potana could not proceed further and therefore went out for relaxation; and in the interval the Lord came down and completed the rest in the guise of the pœt. On returning, the pœt seeing the beautiful completion of the difficult metre to his great surprise, questioned his daughter nearby about the wonderful authorship. The little girl said that he, it was, that was writing continuously. Thus Potana knew it was Sri Maha Vishnu that wrote up the lines and congratulated his child for having seen the Lord though in the father's garb. Again, when Varaha avatar was being described a white boar was reported to have guarded the residence of the poet and chased away the soldiers of the ruler who came to seize the Bhagavata by force. Whether these stories are true or false, the most important moral that crystallises from them is that God, the creator, protector, and destroyer is omnipresent and deals the right way with one and all in this universe.

Potana passed away in the latter part of the 15th century (1460? 1470?), but he is living eternally through his Bhagavatam.

(A. V. S. S.)

PRAYER

My heart pants for Thy bliss sacred, and longs
To reach Thee! O! creator of the world,
Protector of devotees, and with the might
Of incarnations to quell sin! Save me!



THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF

BAMMERA POTANA

WHO CREATED THE IMMORTAL

TELUGU BHAGAVATAM.

(A. V. S. S.)

ERRATA.

Page.	Line.	Read	For
xii	3	Visishtadvaita	Vishistadvaita
xix	17	Carnatic	carnatic
xx	24	that	and
xxi	8	poverty	proverty
2	27	tempt	temp
3	36	Hiranyakasipu	Hiranyakasyappa
5	35	adjourned	adjoined
6	Last line	(Bharatavarsha) south	(Bhararsha) southava
9	10	Concentrated	Concetrated
	16	' Brahmachary '	' Brahmacharya '
10	31	ways and means	way and means
11	3	vedas	vadas
	6	leaner	learner
13	8	gateways	gatways
15	10	believed	belived
16	2	groves	grooves
	3	wilderness	wildreness
23	35	see	see the
	36	Bhavani	Bahavani
24	35	Payovrata	Pyovrata
26	29	previous	pervious
28	11	remained	remined
28	27	Sri Rama Avatara	
29	7	Subahu	Subhahu
	22	install	instal
30	3	Dandakaranya	Dandakarunya
	6	Surpanakha	Surpanaka
	9	his sister	her sister
	19	intercepted	intercede
31	2	Kumbhakarna	Kumbakarna
	24	plantains	planatains
32	2	dinned	dimmed
34	11	pregnancy	pregenancy
36	26	pieces	piecees

Page.	Line.	Read	For
43	2	ecstasy	ecstacy
45	19	angels	argles
53	5	around	allround
56	11	manoeuvring	manoevring
57	4	appeared	appear'd
59	19	Narada	Narda
61	30	object	objeet
63	29	do	does
65	35	Krishna	krishna
	36	ensuing	ensuring
66	1	wielding	weilding
72	21	troops	troups
73	5	Rukmini	Rukmani
73	Last line	confidence	confidenee
79	7	Kundina	Kundini
84	12	deceased	the diseased
85	6	didst	did
86	3	support'd	suport'd
89	23	simultaneously	simulataneously
90	14	like	lik
91	17	have	has
93	21	worshipp'd	worshop'd
94	7	own	one
95	13	groves	goves
	15	lest	les
101	11	expiate	expatiate for
	25	for want	of want
105	27	feasted	feasted with
107	36	satisfy	satlsfy
108	27	Sutala	Sutali
109	12	Dwaraka	Daraka
110	17	wake	awake
	20	virtue	vitue
	31	different	differet
111	15	beatific	beatiflc
111	28	permanent	permanant
	Last line	Couldst	Could
114	29	ecstasy	ectasy
115	20	Curse	Cure

Page.	Line.	Read	For
	31	respect	respect a
116	3	Eightyone	Eighty one
118	10	to	for
	18	The	tee
119	7	Yadavas	Vadavas
	25	universe	univere
122	13	practise	paractise
	25	gambling technique	gambling techniqur
123	2	sacrifice	scrifice
	7	permanence	permanance
124	8	gods ! "	gods !
125	24	called	calied
126	17	Kshatriyas	Kshatryas
	27	panacea	penacea
127	7	thyself	thy-elf
128	26	appeared	appearred
	27	penance	peanance



Excerpts from Potana's Bhagavatam.

SKANDA I

The rule of Parikshit.

King Dharmaraja placed Parikshit on the throne before he and his brothers freed themselves from earthly existence. Parikshit ruled in an ideal manner and his subjects remained happy.

Sringi curses Parikshit.

Parikshit went out for a hunt into the forest with his followers as wild animals were menacing the peaceful living of the citizens. After the successful hunt of a day the king and his men became thirsty and hungry and were marching in search of rest and comfort. Nearing a hermitage they saw a silent sage, whom the king requested for water to drink, but to no response. The sage was in deep meditation. Waiting long to no purpose, the king lost his temper and exclaimed:

This man with eye lids closed as if in depth
Of meditation speaks not, gestures not!
No water or fruit sweet for thirst and heat!
This sage is blind with glory great and false;
His penance forgets men in need and want!
The king wound round the neck of sage a snake
With life extinct, and quick returned in spite
Against the host that spoke no word to him!

After a while, the neighbours saw the ghastly sight of the revered rishi and informed his son Sringi about the matter. Sringi returned back with his companions and roared in anger:

My father speaks no words of heat and meets
No men of spite but eats the tubers hard
Of woods, and sits with sight of God at heart!
No gifts and gold are had by us in woods;

And blessings false are not bestow'd by us!
Away from homes we live in forests lone!
No harm can come from us in search of God !
How then the king has wound a viper dead
Round sacred neck of sage in sacrilege?

The young sage wended to the banks of the Kausil after offering prayers to God cursed the king in burning

The haugty king that laid the viper dead
Around the neck of sage in Godly thought,
Shall die on seventh day of venom hot
Of Takshaka; and Gods shall not save him!

Sringi returned to the hermitage and yelled out in so the sight of his father, Samika. Later Samika opened in time and took away the dead serpent and learnt the story from his son. He felt extremely grieved at the irre curse promulgated by the son. At last the old sage s grave news to King Parikshit through one of his pupils.

The king grieved very little on the receipt of the and immediately determined to pass the remaining days life in stern prayer to the Lord. He said:

Why did I go on hunt? Why did I do
The heinous sin of hurting Samika,
The sage in meditation deep? The curse
Of Sringi shall come sure in seven days!
The venom of Takshaka shall kill me!
My life shall go! The splendour royal goes!
Life, lightning-like, shall not temp me at all !
No curse shall go to Sringi from my mouth !

Many noble souls congregated to see the King in r penance and in search of the holy path, and of them Si pleased to guide the king in his noble march to reach t feet of Sri Maha Vishnu.

Suka meets Parikshit.

Parikshit received Suka and the other holy guests v equate respect; and thus started the famous narrative tl through the following pages.

SKANDA II

The Conversation between Suka and Parikshit.

:a spoke : "O king! You have but seven days to live. r mind upon the lotus feet of the Lord. The happiness arth is ephemeral. Give up desires. Be contented. You ain salvation. Now hear the Bhagavata purana." The f King Khatwanga who attained salvation by ardent ɔ the Lord within a short space of time was also narrated.

ikshit said : " I have overcome desires. Please narrate ıe sport of God and more about His incarnations."

:a added: "Brahma prayed ardently to Narayana who d to him and said that He was the fruit of the penance, ained the creation. Once Narada came to Brahma and .he advice like you. Now I shall give all the narrative . as Brahma gave it to Narada."

SKANDA III

the Pandavas and the Kurus were fighting between ves Vidura went out on a pilgrimage, and met Uddhava vay, and learnt from him about the passing away of Sri and Balarama. The sport of the avataras was beset : episodes of salvation of many. Later Maitreya in his rated to Vidura the details of attaining divine bliss. ry of Swayambhumanuvu also was narrated and how he to perform yajna but found earth submerged under ıd prayed to Brahma ardently. At this juncture yajna- appeared and grew into enormous proportions and dived :ers and saved the earth. At this the rishis praised the

itreya again spoke to Vidura about the killing of ksha by the incarnation of Varaha.

Hiranyaksha.

: Lord of Sri Vaikunta decreed as per curses of Sanaka andana, that Jaya and Vijaya, the guards at the gates of a, would take three births on earth and by fighting with uld ultimately regain their former positions. The first inimical brothers is Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasyappa, Diti and Kasyapa.

Hiranyaksha gained boons from Brahma and grew proud and haughty and was running in vain searching to fight with Vishnu. Narada advised the asura to go to Rasathala where Vishnu could be met for a decisive fight.

Vishnu as Boar, dwarf first, but soon grew high
To sky, and tore the seas in rage to fetch
The Earth in Rasatala deep, with claws
Sharp, fearful and put down the waves of seas.
The Lord of Earth went into seas to search
His Queen, as Boar in yajna shape !
Hiranyaksha met the Boar and swung
His club in spite, but it broke oown with ease
Before the Lord, who bled the asura poor !
The Boar looked like clouds blue and large of eve,
And mountain like and resplendent with lustre
In goring Hiranyaksha bleeding dead ;
And elevated the Earth with praises from Gods !

SKANDA IV

Maitreya gave the story of Dhruva to Vidura.

Dhruva.

Swayambhuva arose from Brahma and married Satarupa. The couple bore two sons Priyavrata and Uttanapada. Uttanapada became famous and had two queens Suniti and Surichi, the latter monopolising royal love. Suniti had a son by name Dhruva and Surichi, Uttama.

In court the king sat on the throne in joy ;
Uttama came and sat on lap of his father high ;
The father and son smiling, kissing soft ;
And now Dhruva came up to sit on lap
Of father, but was disowned and hurled low !
Surichi spoke with pride : " Thou shouldst have been
Son mine to reach thy father's lap and not
Of her ! Pray Vishnu and become my son ! "
Dhruva in sorrow, shame and rage went home
And met his mother Suniti, in tears,
Who seated her son on lap and soft embraced
The crying lad, and wiped the tears and set

Aright the hair on head and heard the woe
And tale of partiality of king in grief!

Suniti comforted Dhruva and told him that devotion to the Lord would end all sorrow. Further she said :

My son! the king views me not ev'n as
Attendant base, and I bore thee son!
Misfortune is with us, and Vishnu shall
Redeem thee son! Go, pray! The Lord shall help!

Dhruva took leave of his dear mother and started for doing penance in a forest. Narada met him on the way and learnt the sore story of the prince whom he advised first to return home. Dhruva refused sternly and said that he was in search of the balm from God for the sore wounds inflicted by his stepmother. Then the sage advised him to do penance in Madhura forest on the banks of the Yamuna, and initiated him also into 'Vasudeva mantra.' The little boy continued in stern penance. The Lord appeared before the young devotee who then sang praises of Narayana and had divine response thus :

O prince! the pain at heart of thine is known
To me, and I will grant thee a state
Of honour high and rare! It is in stars!
It is supreme and permanent, the range
Of thy name which shall sway ov'r deluge even!
Thou shalt rule ov'r for twenty six thousand years
On earth in fame and reach thy starry home!
Thy brother shalt die in a hunt in woods ;
His mother searching for her son, dies too!
As king thou worship ME and live in truth!

So saying, Narayana disappeared and reached his heavenly abode.

Dhruva slowly wended his way homeward. Narada informed Uttanapada earlier about the return of Dhruva. The old father extended an affectionate and royal welcome to the son returning with angelic glory and soon placed him on the throne.

Uttanapada adjoined to the forest for penance. As informed by Narayana earlier, Uttama and Surichi met with death in the forest.

Dhruva completed his tenure of terrestrial reign and reached his sublime starry status.

Thus the story of Dhruva was narrated by Maitreya to Vidura who became very pleased and thanked the narrator and subsequently returned to Hastinapur.

Prithu.

Prithu and Arcis arose from Nisada who was derived from the corpse of Vena the great grandson of Chaksusa-Manu. Prithu and Arcis lived as man and wife.

The Earth said to Prithu :

O Lord ! save me as thou bore me from seas !
The life of plants is in myself and now
As cow, my milk secretes all wants of thine !
Later,
Swayambhuva Manu became the calf !
Prithu milked vegetables in His hands !

Prithu levelled the earth and made her his daughter. Thus the first shaping of life took place on earth under the benign rule of Prithu. Prithu made many yajnas and at last aspired for the position of Indra, but later learnt the real path for salvation and dived into quest of SELF and gave up his kingdom, and went into the woods ; and body ceasing reached Vaikunta.

Barhi.

Barhi the grandson of Antardhana and great grandson of Prithu is described as the champion of action and famed for having performed many yajnas. He married Satadruti and brought forth ten sons, Prachetas. The ten sons entered into long penance for one thousand years with the object of enhancing creation.

Narada advised the king that the path of salvation lay in the quest of SELF and not in repeating yajnas which drowned one in karma, and informed him further about Puranjana. Immediately abdicating the throne, Barhi went to Kapila's hermitage for meditation and attained bliss.

Puranjana.

King Puranjana gave up company of his constant friend of thousand years and chose an earthly town (Bhararsha) southtava

of the Himalayas. In the new place the king found a beautiful damsel and lived with her happily in a garden. The entire town had nine gateways and the population was protected by a five-headed serpent. The king was lost in his queen with carnal love and blind lust.

One day Puranjana went out hunting in his five-horsed chariot and returned late forgetting home and housewife and apologised for the delay in returning to his queen. The couple bore one thousand and one hundred sons and one hundred and ten daughters. Sacrifices made were many by the king.

Candavega and his army repeatedly attacked Bharatavarsha and gradually debilitated the serpent guard.

The daughter of Kala was refused by sage Narada and King Fear, when she made overtures. The army of King Fear attacked the stronghold of Puranjana and killed the serpent guard. Puranjana lived with Puranjani for one hundred years and was lost in his attachment to her till the end. He died and was reborn as the daughter of king Vidarbha, and married the King of Pandya and bore him one daughter and seven sons. After years, at the death of her husband, the daughter of Vidarbha mourned bitterly and was preparing to observe 'sati'. At this juncture the good old friend of Puranjana appeared in time and revealed how 'maya' overcame him and took him round many vicissitudes. He and his friend were swans on the lake Manasa (the mind) having lived in peace for one thousand years.

The explanation by sage Narada of the foregoing allegory briefly and poetically is thus :

The town is body mortal! Puranjana
Is Purusha with gates, the portals nine
Of body; and his friend is Iswara!
The Queen is Buddhi and the ten
Attendants are the limbs to act
And perceive; and serpent is Prana!
The hunt is joy in state of dreams!
Meditation on Him takes one to Him!

The penance of Prachetasu brothers.

The brothers went westward and there Siva greeted them and blessed them and taught them prayer to Vishnu–Rudra

Gita. They prayed in waters for one thousand years when Vishnu appeared and blessed the dutiful brothers a son like Brahma.

The brothers married Marisa, the daughter of Kandu Rishi and Marisa brought forth the famous Daksha who was controlled by Lord Siva at one stage.

SKANDA V

Rishabha.

Rishabha's father knew that his son was an avatar of Vishnu. Rishabha married Jayanti and had hundred sons of whom Bharatha stands unique.

One day Rishabha summoned his sons and said:

My sons! the world is known to me in full!
The kingdom and joys no more tempt me!
You are my sons with blood of purest ray
And thus you are the ones good for work great!
Do follow Bharatha and reign! I go!

Rishabha went in silence calm for years,

And last took 'Ajagara' shape in woods,
And with end nearing ate stones hard and went
To bamboo forest which burnt him to death!

Bharatha.

Suka narrated to Parikshit the story of Bharatha of 'Bharatha Khanda' fame and a great devotee of the Lord.

Bharatha ruled the country justly and finding no respite for meditation, gave over the reigns of government to his sons and adjourned to a forest.

One day the king bathed in the holy Gandaki and was offering prayers. At that time a deer full term and in thirst came to the banks of the river, when she heard the roar of a lion. Frightened and in agony, the deer delivered her young-one into the water and subsequently died on the river bank in shock.

The king opened his eyes and saw the drifting fawn and saved it in pity and began to rear it very affectionately in his

hermitage. The love bestowed on it increased day by day and ultimately the meditation on God turned into filial duty to a young deer.

Once the growing deer went far and was missing from the royal hermit's hut and this made the guardian anxious and unhappy until its return. Thus the aim of Godly thought disappeared and instead mortal affinity developed in stronger bonds between Bharatha and his pet.

Days moved fast and the end of the royal rishi came and he died with his attention and affection concetrated on the deer. The last thoughts made the man reborn as a deer and the life of this deer was spent in prayerful quiescence, at the hermitage of Pulaha and Pulasthavya. Life as deer ended but existence started again as the son of a brahmana Angirasa, through his second wife. As the boy grew up the parents trained him as 'Brahmacharya' after Upanayana. The parents died leaving the boy into the hands of the half brothers who meted out very partial treatment but it did not hurt him. The boy growing into manhood was known as 'Jada Bharatha' because of his superficial stupidity and dirtiness, but his vision was indeed inward towards SELF.

Time rolled on. Bharatha became a guard on the fields on account of the machinations and illtreatment at home. One night he was picked up by some soldiers of a certain childless king Vrishala, for human sacrifice before Kali. Things were got ready for the appointed hour and as the murderer's sword was about to fall on the neck of the innocent victim standing peacefully resigned to the Lord, Goddess Kali darted out alive from the image and killed everybody else except the poor brahmana. Later Bharatha walked out of the temple of Kali and continued the guard at the paddy fields.

Some years passed.

Once the ruler of Sind, Rahugana, aspired to have spiritual initiation from the sage Kapila and was proceeding in a palanquin. The palanquin reached the spot where Bharatha was present. The captain of the bearers caught hold of Bharatha who looked well-built and placed one arm on his back and thus evaded the burden.

The new bearer being cautious to the rhythmic steps of the carriers was moving silently and patiently and peacefully, avoiding the crushing of little lives, but the effect was discomfort to the inmate who angrily chided the bearers in common, but the culprits informed the king that the fault lay with the fourth man. At this the haughty rider said:

O man, mean, dead though living with the breath !
Thou movest not in the order ! Know the way ! "
The Brahmana spoke not and bore the weight
On back but knew the truth of lives and paths !

Later the brahmana replied soft:

O king ! thy words are true ! the weight is born
By body and not soul ! The births and deaths
Are common to all flesh ! Love, hate, disease,
And pain of mind are born with body frail !
My self is with the Lord, and punishment
Meted out to me is waste as it hurts not !
I bear this palnquin to count my days !

The king heard all that the Brahmin bearer said in a learned and noble way, and immediately alighted from the palanquin and fell down at the feet of the wise adviser and begged the saintly person to forgive him. "O great soul ! Are you Kapila the great sage in disguise ? I am going to him for being helped in the path of the Lord. I have spoken blindly and in royal pride and hurt a Godly being whose praises now I shall sing with all my heart."

The king lost his love of the body and proceeded in the light of the teaching.

Bharatha on completion of his 'karma' reached the lotus feet of the Lord.

SKANDA VI

King Parikshit asked sage Suka the way and means of avoiding 'Narakas.' The reply was the narration of the story of Ajamila who attained the lotus feet of the Lord by devotion even at the last moment.

Ajamila.

Ajamila, Brahmana, gave up the rites
Of vadas high and took to women low
And had sons many and lived life in lust !
Games evil and talk foul were his day's round.
Hair dark turn'd white ; limbs learner grew;
Desires increased ; the head shook loose ; teeth fell !
The man four score and eight in age, kept son
The last, all day and night in thoughts and called
His name Narayana in fright when death came near !
The agents of Yama came claiming him !
And messengers of Vishnu claimed too
The 'jiva' as their own ! Ajamila old
Said " NARAYANA ! " and set thought on Lord ;
Thus won the grace of saviour great Vishnu !
This argument won ov'r men from Yama.

The messengers of Yama went back and explained to their lord the controversy over the 'jiva' of Ajamila. Yama, the lord of justice, replied " Vishnu, the supreme controller of the universe, knows best. We all abide." Ajamila heard the dispute between the rival parties claiming his 'jiva' and came to his senses. He repented sorely for his past life and went to Haridwar and meditated upon Sri Maha Vishnu and reached His abode with all honours due to a realised soul.

The fight between Danavas and Devatas.

Suka continued thus to Parikshit.

Once Indra was in the height of joy and pride in his court sitting in full complement and in royal splendour. Brihaspati, the Guru then entered the court, but was ignored by Indra and therefore immediately left the place with a heavy heart. Indra realising his mistake later went in search of the Guru who disappeared by his prowess and taught the haughty Indra a lesson.

At this juncture the asuras having had the patronage of their preceptor, Bhargava, attacked the suras and gained an easy victory. The suras and their lord wended their way to Vishnu and informed him about their sorry plight and prayed for mercy. Vishnu informed them that all the suffering was the

fruit of their insult to Brihaspati and advised them to seek the aid of Visvarupa.

Visvarupa pitied Indra and initiated him into 'Narayanakavacha' and Indra observed the same in austerity and gained the upper hand over the enemies and continued his sway in peace.

Indra detected the treachery of Visvarupa in time and severed his three heads and distributed the consequential sin equally between earth, trees, water and women.

Chitraketu

King Chitraketu had many wives and only one son by the blessing of Angirasa after a yajna and this only son brought both joy and sorrow to the parents by his premature death.

The son that died was given temporary life by Narada for a short while, and he expressed before the parents :

O sage ! tell me ! fate brought me here as son
Of Chitraketu, but I am from Him !
Every birth has parents, relations, friends,
And foes, but who is permanent on earth ?
The 'jiva' plays in body by 'karma' !
Who are wives, husbands, sons, friends, foes
To one that knows identity of 'self' !

Narada and Angirasa prescribed to Chitraketu the worship of 'Samkarshana 'by which the Lord was soon realised after stern 'tapas.'

Once while travelling in his chariot on the skies, Chitraketu saw Lord Siva in court openly drawing near his consort Bhavani, and laughed at them and spoke in derision :

Siva, Thou, idol of truth, justice firm,
With locks of hair as proof of penance deep,
Adored by lesser gods and saints hast now
In open court embraced Thy Bhavani !
One loves his wife private and not this way !

At this Siva and his followers smiled but Bhavani cursed the king to take the birth of an asura.

The king descended from his chariot and fell flat at the feet of Bhavani and prayed for pardcn, and expresssd his willing

consent to undergo the curse ordained and said: "The ephemeral existence shall not differentiate between sorrow and joy." Lord Siva then said to his consort: "Chitraketu follows Vishnu as we do too. True devotees are not afraid of what happens to the body. Hence I am unperturbed at the remarks of the insolent king who offended you at once."

SKANDA VII

The curse upon the guards at the gatways of Vaikunta.

King Parikshit addressed sage Suka thus: "O great rishi, why does the Lord save Indra and punish the asuras?" Suka replied: "Dear king, hear me. God has neither a friend nor a foe. All are equal to him. Devatas owning 'sattva' are spared, and the rakshasas having 'rajas and tamas' are checked and set in order by Vishnu. Now the story of the curse falling on the sentry at Vaikunta proves the above points."

Once Sanandana and Sanat Kumara, enjoying through His bliss eternal boyhood and going naked anywhere and everywhere, came to Vaikunta for darshan of the Lord. They were promptly stopped by the guards at the gate Jaya and Vijaya, and thus provoked the sages anxiously awaiting to see Vishnu. The sages cursed the keepers to take asura births. Immediately the guards prostrated at the feet of the sages in repentance and exclaimed: "We have kept to our instructions. We do not know you so great and privileged to the presence of Maha Vishnu immaterial of time and circumstance! Save us." The noble sages pitied and modified the curse by saying that after three turns on earth as asura enemies to the Lord, they would be elevated back to their original positions at the threshold of the abode of the Lord. At this Jaya and Vijaya felt relieved and departed. The first stage is fulfilled by Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu; the second by Ravana and Kumbhakarna; and the third by Sisupala and Dantavaktra.

The sages went into the entrancing presence of Sri Maha Vishnu and had their fill of the longed darshan and departed in immense joy.

Hiranyakasipu.

On the death of his brother, Hiranyakasipu grew sore and held meetings with the asuras and determined to wreak his

revenge upon SriHari. He ordered his asura army to go to earth and spoil the penance of the sages, the yajnas, and in short all that is sanctioned by the suras.

Hiranyakasipu performed the last rites to his departed brother, drew near his nephews and consoled the wives of his brother, and particularly his mother, with ennobling and wise advice and anecdotes.

The asura with ambitious plans went to Mandara mountain and prayed in all austerity and extraordinary determination for one hundred years. He became covered by ant hill, grass and bamboos, and became emaciated and victimised by forest flies. Brahma appeared to him appreciating the penance and desired to satisfy the asura who said with folded hands and in salutation :

Pray, let not death come to me from one in
Thy creation ! So, let not death come to me from
The agency beside Thy realm, on earth or air :
By day or night, in or out, and no man
Or beast, live or dead, and no asura
Or sura or naga quench me to death !
My might shall be supreme like Thine ov'r all !

Brahma smiled and said :

O son of Kasyapa ! My grant is there
To thee ! No one shall have such boons as thine !
All boons of thy choice vast are yielded by ME ;
But be thou good at heart and rule with love !

Thus Brahma left Hiranyakasipu stronger than before.

Hiranyakasipu returned home in high spirits and ruled in place of Indra and in a cruel manner. The asuras worked havoc with the good and innocent citizens. Diti and her son and the rest lived in a palace built by Viswakarma and guided by Sukracharya.

The rule was a hardship to the sages and saints, the suras and in particular to those devoted to Lord Vishnu.

Hiranyakasipu decided to meet Vishnu, fight and avenge the death of his brother, and burning with this desire proceeded in this intoxicated thought relentlessly towards the innocent and the helpless who remained devoted to Lord Vishnu.

Prahlada.

Prahlada was one of the four sons of Hiranyakasipu.

The prince was son true in family !
To serve the poor and elders, he took a pride !
He looked at women all as mothers dear !
All friends were brethren to the prince all time !
He spoke the truth and lived regarding all !

The young prince was mingling with the boys of his age but was different from them in his behaviour and response to things around. He belived in Vishnu and spoke it out to his fellow-students, and while in meditation appeared extraordinary and even insane. He was put to study under the care of Chanda and Amaraka, the sons of Sukracharya.

After some time the father desired to see his son's progress. The son was brought to the father who drew him near and placed him on his lap and said : "My son, tell me something from your lessons." The boy said with folded hands "Mortals shall always think of Vishnu, the supreme Lord." At this the king grew angry but saw his tender child and quenching his disgust exclaimed :

Displeasure, wonder, disappointment sore
My mind do cloud ! my son, is this thy work ?
Or have some suras secretly taught thy mouth ?
Or others misled thy mind immature ?
The resident of Vaikunta is our
Sworn enemy ! know thou, my son, that now !
Our duty lies in ending suras and
In paining lesser gods, their retinue !
Think not of Hari or Giri, in faith
Of fools, but join my hands in my vow sure !

To these words of the father, Prahlada replied in a sober manner while casting respectful looks towards the teachers :

Salutations to those souls that have known SELF
And lost all lust, and realised the Lord !
As iron draws to magnet, thus my mind
Is moving fast to lotus feet of God !
Do bees that suck the flowers sweet wind to
Datura plants ? Does royal swan that swims

In holy Ganga go to rivulets ?
Does kokil chirping in mango grooves green
Fly back to trees with wildreness of buds ?
Does chakora in rays of shining moon
Desire to live in white of frozen snow ?
Ambrosia flowing from meditation on Him
Intoxicates me and I forget the rest !

At this the teachers addressed the king and said to their pupil with displeasure :

Thou, boy of five ! thou goest deep into thoughts
Philosophical, logic tense, but thou
Hast not learnt daily lessons taught by us !
We hang our heads in shame in midst of Court !
Thou art not son but foe to father great !
In sandal garden of asuras thick,
Thou art the thorny tree of shame and sin !
Thou praisest Vishnu, enemy of ours !
Regime of rigid work we shall put on
Thy son, O King, give us some time to shape !

The teachers taught the prince once again the lessons of their asura lore and requested him not to betray them before the king a second time, and then took leave of the ruler.

The father fond drew near the son in love,
Embraced, set right the fore-locks on head,
Geared up the chin and kissed in joy and said :
" Do tell me now a lesson bright, taught thee ?
I wait to hear thy fame as scholar bright ! "

Prahlada replied in all humility :

The teachers taught me ; I have learnt the truth
Of lessons and the lore and that is strength !
Devotional ways nine have I learnt well !
To trust Hari is greatest thing for all !
The mind is meant to think of Lord Vishnu !
The thought is meant to go to Lord Vishnu !
The soul is tied to stay with Lord Vishnu !
The head bows down to feet of Lord Vishnu !
The eyes are meant to see one, Lord Vishnu !

The ears are meant to hear of Lord Vishnu !
The hands are meant to worship Lord Vishnu !
The feet are meant to go round Lord Vishnu !
A day is one when spent in thought of Lord !
A learning is true when it speaks of Lord !
A teacher is one who pours praises of Lord !
The body shall be dedicat'd to Him !
If not, it is just one bag big, of skin !
A man shall think life-long the praise of Him !
If not, it is a life of quadruped !

'hese words pained Hiranyakasipu who roared in thunder-ıger : " Who has taught you these evil lessons ? Have the ɜrs cheated me ? " The son said in peace :

'he faith in God evolves, but is not forced !
O father ! men with interest in things
Material, have births and deaths, and thus
The cycle dark perpetuates for ev'r !
The thought of Lord is boat that takes through seas
Of children, wife, desires, pride, spite and lust !

[earing these words the father threw down his son from his lap and howled out with bitterness and blood-shot " Prahlada ! you are praising my enemy that killed your and my brother as a boar ! You are ungrateful and dis-" Further Hiranyakasipu ordered his ministers to do away ıis son.

he asuras tried every means to kill the innocent prince. pierced him relentlessly with spears, rolled him down the tains, put him into wild seas, crushed him under the feet phants, put him into blazing fire, and even poisoned him, ıe young devotee always stood calm and peaceful with ·s to Sri Hari. At this the father had peculiar reactions ɜlt that his son was gifted and would even bring about an › the present order. At this juncture, Chanda and Ama-net the king and praised and encouraged him.

[iranyakasipu once again requested the sons of Sukracharya ɔh Prahlada, who by this time gained the confidence of his too and began to teach the path of devotion to Sri Hari ; 'urther proclaimed that that was real education which he

had learnt, intrauterine, from sage Narada. This information was reported to the king whose anger knew no bounds. This time the king summoned his son and exclaimed : "Prahlada! This whole universe is under my sway. There is none superior to me. Praise is due to me and not to my enemy Sri Hari about whom you have sung praises. This action of yours is against our asura creed. You are unfit to be my son. Your life should be ended as you cannot be mended any more!"

At this Prahlada said to his father : "There is one ruler for all of us, the universe, and even for Brahma and Siva. He will be with me and you and every body else. He is omnipresent; Sri Hari!"

Hiranyakasipu spoke out at height of displeasure and pain "Where is this Narayana about whom You speak so much?"

Prahlada sang:

Hari is in elements, in day, in night,
In corners too ; in Sun, in Moon, in OM ;
In shapes described ; why search for Sri Hari?
No doubt exists about Hari in this
Area or place or that ; He is in all!

Hiranyakasipu questioned "Can you show Hari in this pillar?" To this, Prahlada said peacefully "YES." The asura king pounced up and struck the pillar with his sword. Immediately a thundering noise came with the breaking down of the pillar, from within which Sri Hari appeared formidable in the shape of NARASIMHA (Man-lion) avatara. Hiranyakasipu attempted to fight with the avatar but was taken in hand soon by the Lord, who placing him on the thighs tore him to death with the nails. The appearance was awesome and struck fear in the minds of those present at the scene.

Brahma and angels, Sri Devi, and others sang praises to the great avatar. The anger of Narasimha did not abate and under advice from Brahma, Prahlada with folded hands and in all humility appeased the Lord by soul-stirring prayer :

May I please Thee O Hari, while Gods
Like Brahma and gods lesser have reced'd!
Birth high, wealth great, form fair, yoga

Or knowledge deep, do not appease Thee Lord,
As devotion and complete surrender blind!
Thou hast heard cry of Gajendra and saved him!
At five, and asura by birth, may I
Invoke Thy grace, as outcaste though, wins ov'r
A brahmana with learning hoary high,
With faith resigned to Thee in all for all!
All that is offer'd to Vishnu-reflects
To self! Of rank low, I praise Thee and that
Act purifies my soul in measure full!

The world is struck with fear at Thy man-lion
Avatar; and now recede in joy!
I worship for redemption from births, deaths
In cycle and Thou show mercy sweet
To me, and grant eternal service at
Thy lotus-feet with realized souls in peace!

The parents do not save their child; and drug
Is not cure for dead; the boat is not
For drowning one; but effort emanates
From Lord Vishnu in Vaikunta in His bliss!
My father gift'd with boons from Brahma too
Had end, in Thy man-lion avatar grave;
The happiness on earth is one mirage!

The grace of Narada has made me pray
To Thee and seek salvation for us all!
We are bound in 'maya' and going through
The ocean deep of births and deaths on earth!
My father has fought Thee to reach Thy feet!
Brahma was born in lotus springing up
From navel Thine; saw not his origin,
And searched for thousand years and then had seen
Thee with Lakshmi, on Sesha, in depths blue!
O God! save us all from 'Vaitarani'
And crossing it is liberation prompt!
The rituals do take the man to pride
And not to Thee and please do save us all!
Thou shalt be seen in ways of world
Through 'bhakti' pure, the course of bliss supreme!

God Narasimha was pleased with Prahlada and desired to hear requests when the asura prince said : " I have no lust or love of worldly things. Please make me free from 'kama' and that is the only boon that I ask of Thee." The avatar replied : " Live on earth ruling your subjects in the righteous way throughout the period of manvantara. Later leave your body to reach ME. During your rule on earth, you will have all joy and peace and you will be constantly devoted to ME and propagating 'Atmavidya.' You are a true devotee with 'bhakti.' Your father is purified by ME. Do him the last rites now."

Brahma and lesser Gods showered praises on Narasimha avatar who warned Brahma not to award boons to asuras which amounted to feeding serpents with ambrosia.

The Narasimha avatara vanished into Vaikunta and in time Brahma and the lesser gods adjourned to their respective heavenly abodes.

Prahlada followed the divine advice. He consoled his mother and performed the last rites to his father. He ascended the throne and ruled in an ideal manner.

SKANDA VIII

The salvation of the elephant king (Gajendra.)

Suka further narrated this story to king Parikshit.

There was a famous mountain called Trikuta which contained a forest, and many wild animals lived in it.

An elephant king was roaming with a herd of his queens in the forest intoxicated with the sexual urge. After wild wandering he and his herd became thirsty and reached a lake and stopped at its banks to quench their thirst. In the lake lived many fishes, tortoises and crocodiles. The elephant king filled his trunk and satisfied his thirst and also helped his queens and calves. At this juncture a crocodile caught hold of the fore-feet of the elephant king powerfully and thus engaged him for no less than one thousand years in a continuous fight. The crocodile was blessed with the residential aquatic strength and therefore Gajendra got thinner and weaker and was despairing helplessly while his queens and calves were wailing on the banks.

Gajendra losing faith in his own effort prayed ardently to the Lord:

What shape or strength shall I obtain to win
The foe that trapped my forefeet thousand years?
To creator and controller and the root
Of all the universe and the one
With none of human limits and to HIM
Resigning myself blind I look for help!
There is God on behalf of helpless ones!
There is God for devotees that think of Thee!
There is God in all the space of world!
God present thus: is He with me or not?
No strength, no courage, and thus fainting down
I stand, with faith in Thee and Thee alone!

Thus Gajendra prayed sternly and Sri Hari heard the prayers as the mother discerns the cry of her babe.

There in Vaikunta, abode of Vishnu
Rests He on flowery bed near banks of lake
Ambrosial in Mandara garden gay,
But heard the cry of elephant king low
In grief, as saviour sure, and charged earthward!

Vishnu spoke not to His consort; took none
Of army strong; armed not with disc or conch
Or club, set not hair locks; forgot the hold
Of veil ov'r bosom of Lakshmi whilst in
The rapturous sport of love but tore to save
Gajendra locked with crocodile in fight!

Vishnu pounced down upon the Trikuta mountain in the direction of the cry of the elephant king and was being closely followed by Lakshmi and her retinue, Garuda, the cyclic weapon, and conch, Narada, and the chief of the divine army· The Lord has not told any one the object of the urgent mission.

With ear rings loose, hair locks stray on back,
The veil ov'r bosom dislocat'd, and bright
Waist band in lustrous twinkles round alluring waist,
With dust of sandal paste falling off the face,

And with a silk in hand and with the light
Of Moon's halo full, Lakshmi ran down!

Sri Hari thus came down and applied His disc, the invincible weapon, to the crocodile which immediately collapsed giving rise to HUHU, a gandharva bearing the curse of sage Devala. The elephant king freed from the battle bowed low before Hari who patted and stroked his back with affection; and the divine touch produced out of him King Indradyumna undergoing the curse of Agasthya. The combatants and the witnessing angels sang the praises of Sri Hari and flowers rained from the heavens above. The Lord returned to Vaikunta and the liberated souls to their own homes.

The Churning of Milk Ocean.

Parikshit heard this story again from Suka.

The asuras gained the upper hand over the devatas with the help of Sukra and put Indra and the suras to shame. Indra was cursed by Durvasa and became bereft of Sri.

Indra and devatas went to Brahma and all of them prayed sternly to Ajita, the preserver. Vishnu appeared before them and advised the devatas to churn the milk ocean along with the asuras until it yielded 'Amrita'; and by partaking of Amrita they would become immortal and happy. "Throw herbs and plants into the ocean. Churn with Mandara mountain bearing Vasuki round it as a rope. Churn hard with patience and with no greed for fruit thereof. Poison may come out first, but lose no heart. Be lenient to your asura partners. I will help you."

The devatas and asuras compromised and uprooted and mobilised Mandara mountain towards the ocean. The mountain dropped on the journey crushing to death many under its weight. Vishnu pitied the victims and brought them back to life and thereafter ordered Garuda to carry the mountain into the ocean. The serpent king Vasuki was assured of some ambrosia and yielded to act as the rope round the mountain pivoted in the milk ocean. The devatas held at first at the head end, and after a time the mountain was found sinking to the great disappointment and sorrow of the tugging parties. At this point Vishnu took the avatar of TORTOISE and supported the mountain and allowed the progress of the mighty churning.

The mouths of Vasuki emitted fire and smoke and put to suffering the asuras but the devatas were saved by the Lord's timely showering rain and coolness on them. The churning went on. A poison (halahala) came up with frightening force, and it was swallowed by Siva with his consort's sanction, and this deed coloured his throat blue.

And churning went on. Surabhi (cow of plenty) came up and was taken over by the rishis. Then came Uchaisrava (horse) which was claimed by Bali. Then came Airavata (elephant) which Indra captured. Then arose Kaustubha (gem) which adorned Vishnu. Subsequently Parijata and Apsarasas (angelic beauties) came up. Then appeared Goddess Lakshmi with a halo and accepted Vishnu who placed Her on His breast. Then came Varuni whom the asuras accepted. Finally Dhanvantari rose up with the pot of 'Amrita' the sight of which created quarrels amongst the greedy asuras who seized the pail by force and the devatas were looking in helplessness and despair. Now Vishnu took the avatar of a beautful damsel 'Mohini.'

Mohini was the centre of attraction now. The asuras were captivated by the enchanting beauty of the maid who took hold of the pot of ambrosia by common consent. She distributed it only to devatas placed in one row intentionally and all the time danced and talked with twinkling eyes and bewitching smiles to the row of asuras. Rahu suspecting a disappointment, sat early with the devatas and shared ambrosia. The Sun and Moon pointed out this treachery and Vishnu immediately severed the asura's head by His Chakra. The head having drunk ambrosia became immortal and Brahma made it Rahu which today eclipses Sun and Moon.

Thus not a drop of amrita came to the asuras. Mohini disappeared as Vishnu openly sitting on the back of Garuda.

The devatas and asuras fought bitterly after the distribution of amrita. Seeing the asuras gain the upper hand, Vishnu helped the devatas to victory.

Siva became anxious to see the Mohini himself and therefore went with Bahavani to Vishnu who readily converted himself into Mohini.

In garden under shade of flowers fine,
A damsel young was playing with a ball!
A virgin beauty that hands love to hold,
And lips suck to drink deep in kiss for long.
And eyes stare to feast full on form for ev'r!
The girl wore belt and ov'r it silken veil,
And walked in steps which shook her breasts with charm!
Face bright with curly locks of hair on head;
Cheeks red and shining with rays from ear-rings,
Adorned on neck with rows of pearly chains,
The maid ran up and down in strides with feet
That shone like coral shoots and this drew Siva!
She smiled and looked with gestures shy and soft,
And playing went in chase of ball that rolled
Off her hands delicate, and slipped her veil.
Now blew a wind that took away the veil
In full from her and at this sight Siva
Filled his eyes green, and as great Bhavani
Was looking on, pounced sharp on her with lust,
Embraced with hair locks in hand, though she moved
Unwilling, and soon fled out far from hold!
Siva chased after and shed seed of gold and silv'r!
Mohini ceased and soon Vishnu came out
In halo and restored Siva to peace!

Vamana.

The Vamana avatar was elaborated by Suka to Parikshit.

Indra defeated Bali who on the advice of his Guru Sukra performed Viswajit Yajna and earned therefrom a chariot with horses, golden bow with two quivers full of arrows and divine armour. Thus freshly equipped, Bali won over Indra and ruled Swarga. The devatas were in distress as also Indra's queen, Sachi Devi. One hundred aswamedha sacrifices were observed by Bali.

Aditi was disconsolate at the downfall of her sons and was initiated into Pyovrata by her husband Kasyapa. After prayers Vishnu was pleased and said to Aditi: "I shall be your son to set right matters. Indra shall reign once again".

Vamana was born to Aditi. He was a dwarf. He attended the Aswamedha Yaga of King Bali who received the young Brahmachari with due honours and requested him to express his credentials and desires. Vamana spoke :

Can I describe my home as I have none!

Can I describe my kin, as I have none !
I learn to walk in my own way, O king !
Can I describe my steps, as I walk in
Ways three ! I know the ways of all in world !
I live in paths of mortals good and pure.!
O king ! thy race is full of name and fame !
Prahlada shines in resplendent light !
Grandfathers Hiranyakasipu and
Hiranyaksha, who faced Vishnu bold
Have died to reach the lotus feet of Lord !
I want not bride nor cloth nor gold nor fruit,
Nor food nor car nor cow nor horse nor house !
Three paces of ground may I have from thee king ?

The king requested the boy to revise his demand, but it was confirmed in full satisfaction. The king consented gladly to give the same. Sukra, the Guru of Bali, suspected a deep plan of Vishnu and advised the king not to accede to the boy's request, and quoted instances when a word given may even be broken, and warned the boy to be Vishnu in disguise. But the truthful descendant of Prahlada stuck to his word and proceeded with the formal observance of the gift. The king was offering water in fulfilment of his promise when it was obstructed by Sukra within the nose of the golden pitcher containing the water. The nose was probed by Vamana with kusa grass and the effect was that Sukra lost one of his eyes. Sukra then cursed Bali in rage : "You will lose all your kingdom and prosperity ! " King Bali expressed :

Kings there were who in glory lived and died !

Did they with them pack up their gold and wealth ?
Some men kept true to word and gave up all
To satisfy cause true and died, and now
Are they forgotten on the earth by us ?
The hands of Vishnu which caress Lakshmi

Are now below my hands that give the gift !
And thus I will give land paces three to Him !
This kingdom grand is evanescent spark !

Vamana expressed satisfaction and took the gift and grew into enormous proportions and occupied with one pace the whole Bhu-loka, with other pace the whole of the rest, and the third pace was awaiting reception. The asuras seeing this injustice came to war with the followers of Vishnu, who at once ordered Garuda to entangle Bali in a noose.

Vamana demanded of Bali " Where is the place for my third pace ? "

Bali replied with peace and joy : "Please keep Thy third pace on my head "

Vamana did so and sent Bali and his noble queen Vindhyavati down to Sutala on the recommendation of Brahma, and promised to make him Indra in suvarna man-vantara. Bali expressed then thus :

The kith and kin are thieves ; sons creditors !
Wives do perpetuate ties on earth !
Ephemeral is wealth, so short is life !
My race was drawn to Thee in fight as foes !
Prahlada reached Thy feet and shines a star !
And now Thou chose to be my guest in guise !
My fortune is thus profound, supreme !

Indra was reinstated as the ruler of Triloka. The devatas sang praises of the Lord.

Matsyavatara.

The vedas fell out of his mouth when Brahma was getting stuporous at the termination of the previovs kalpa. Vishnu saw the vedas being stolen by Hayagriva, and took the shape of a small fish and went into the hands of King Satyavrata as he was offering prayers with water in his hands. The fish was rejected into the river but it requested the king for being spared and preserved.

The king reared the fish in a pot in his own palace, but it grew soon into enormous size needing oceanic residence.

While the king was about to put the fish into the sea suspecting it to be a divine incidence, the fish said:

O king, spare me! wait seven days and then
There shall be a deluge and the world will sink!
There shall be an ark floating and in it
Place rishis, thyself, plants, and living ones!
The ark be tied to me with serpent strong
When storm rages wild and till winds stop will I
Be with the ark and till Brahma wakes up!
Thus will I save all life and vedas safe!
I will preach wisdom to thee, pure, divine!

All the forecast came true and the advice was followed by Satyavrata and he thereafter became Manu.

SKANDA IX

Ambarisha.

Sage Suka narrated the story of Ambarisha to king Parikshit. Ambarisha was the son of Nabhaga

Ambarisha's mind reached lotus feet
Of Lord Vishnu! His head bent down to Him!
His eyes looked at conch, disc and mace!
His ears heard glory of Vishnu! He spoke
Of Lord in ecstatic joy great! His nose
Had smell for ev'r of Tulsi at feet of Lord!
His hands cleansed ev'r the shrines of Lord Vishnu!
His skin thrilled from devotees when they touched him!
His feet walked only to the temples true!
His meal was offerings placed at feet of Lord!
He lived for those who lived to pray to Him!
He gave up all to Lord Vishnu in joy!
The Lord blessed king Ambarisha with disc,
The sacred weapon to save good and great,
And to end sin and sinning folk on earth!

Once Ambarisha and his wife observed 'Dvadasi vrata' for one year. Subsequently in the month of Kartika the royal couple observed fasting on three consecutive days, and then bathed in the holy waters of the Kalindi and worshipped Sri Hari in Madhuvana in an austere way.

The king gave a sumptuous feast to the assembled devotees and brahmins and also gave them with respect suitable presents including cows and calves. The pious couple were about to break their fast, and at this time walked in sage Durvasa who was requested with due honours to be a guest. The sage consented and went to the river for his preparation and purification by bath and prayers. Time was advancing and a short space only available for the breaking of the fast. At this crisis the king took advice from the assembly and was suggested to take water but no food. Thus he respected procedure and the sage still remined overdue.

Durvasa returned and saw through his spiritual vision what transpired and found fault with Ambarisha for having broken the fast before his arrival. Anger rose in him with uncontrollable force and he took a lock of his matted hair and made it into a destructive spirit and sent it after the innocent and dutiful host who remained calm and in peace. The Chakra, Vishnu gave, came out with flaming fire and engulfed the evil spirit as a forest fire gulps down a glow worm. It charged the sage Durvasa relentlessly, who went to Brahma and Siva for help but with no relief. Durvasa chased by the Chakra with its scorching heat, approached Lord Vishnu who said that he was powerless and he was guided by his devotees and advised the rishi to appeal to Ambarisha. The righteous king saw the sage fall flat at his feet for mercy and immediately prayed to the Chakra to withdraw. Thus the sage was saved.

Sri Rama Avatar.

Sage Suka narrated the avatar of Sri Ramachandra to king Parikshit.

King Dasaratha, hailing from Ikshvaku dynasty had three wives Kausalya, Sumitra, and Kaikeyi, but no children. The king performed Putrakameshti yaga, and the Lord of Fire pleased with the penance offered a vessel full of 'paramanna' to the king. This gift was distributed to the three queens, who as a result bore the four sons, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, and Satrugna, and these are but the embodiments of the supreme one, Lord Vishnu himself. Kausalya was the mother of Rama ; Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharatha ; and Sumitra, the mother of Lakshmana and Satrugna.

To the old king the sons were everything on earth, and they were trained in an ideal manner.

One day sage Viswamitra came to the royal court and requested the king to help his efforts by sending Rama along with him to forests where the rakshasas were spoiling the tapas! Rama and Lakshmana went into the forest and quelled down Thataki as also Maricha and Subhahu.

The sage took Rama and Lakshmana into Mithila, the capital of King Janaka.

Rama broke bow of great Siva with ease,
As elephant deals with sugar cane in taste!
Rama weds Sita in the joy supreme
As Lord Vishnu placed on His chest Lakshmi!

Lakshmana married Urmila; Bharatha Mandavi; and Satrugna Srutakirti. The four princes with their wives were marching towards Ayodhya, their capital, and on their way met Parasurama, the avowed enemy of the royal race. Sri Rama sub-dued Parasurama and relieved him of all his powers.

At Ayodhya Dasaratha was planning to enthrone Rama. Bharatha was in his maternal uncle's house with Satrugna. Kaikeyi, the pet queen, was instigated by her maid servant, Mandara, to instal her own son Bharatha as the ruler of Ayodhya. Therefore she requested Dasaratha as per his previous promise, to fulfil two boons. The fond king consented not realising the nature of the demands. One boon was to send Rama into forest. The second was to make Bharatha the king instead of Rama. At this, old and fond Dasaratha was in agony, as he had to yield to his word and bear separation from his Rama, dear as life Sri Rama understood the situation and respecting his father's words went to forest with Sita and Lakshmana.

Dasaratha died of broken heart, due to separation from Sri Rama.

Bharatha returned to the capital and saw the fateful turn of events, grieved and resolved only to be true to his brother Rama. He performed the last rites to his departed father. Subsequently he went to his brother at Chitrakuta forest and entreated him to return. Rama refused Bharatha said he would only run the administration in Rama's name during the twelve years of

the king's absence, and that he would do so placing the sacred sandals of SriRama in the king's role at Nandigrama.

Sri Rama marched to Dandakarunya, where he killed rakshasas, and helped the sages in 'tapas.'

Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana were camping in a hermitage at Panchavati. Surpanaka, the sister of Ravana, king of Lanka, came and exhibited amorous qualities before Rama; and Lakshmana punished her by cutting away her ears and nose. Hearing the sad fate of her sister and also of the exquiste beauty of Sita, Ravana wanted to kidnap her and therefore sent Maricha to go as a gold stag and attract the mind of Sita and then Rama would chase him and give the necessary opportunity for action. The vicious plan succeeded. Rama chased the alluring and evasive stag and shot it dead, and while dying it uttered from a distance the words "LAKSHMANA! LAKSHMANA!!" Hearing the weird cries, Sita insisted on Lakshmana leaving the hermitage for his brother's help. Ravana appeared on the scene as a mendicant and carried away Sita as she hid inside the hut. Jatayuvu interceded but was killed by Ravana.

Rama returned and found not Sita. Rama did the last rites to Jatayuvu, the benefactor, and was moving towards Rushyamuka with Sugriva who was sore because of his defeat at the hands of his own brother Vali. Rama killed Vali and reinstated Sugriva. Hanuman, a lieutenant of Sugriva, became devoted to Sri Ramachandra and undertook to secure Sita Devi.

Hanuman flew over the seas to Lanka and identified Sita, pining in grief under an asoka tree, and presented to her his credentials and also the ring from SriRama as token of his bona fides, and further took from her a token to Rama. While returning, the mighty messenger ruined the royal gardens, and under spell of Brahma asthra used by Indrajit became a captive ambassador, and went into the presence of Ravana to whom he preached good sense. Subsequently he recovered and burnt Lanka with the burning fire tied on to his tail.

Hanuman returned and spoke to Rama about the welfare of his consort.

Rama and Lakshmana mobilised an army with the help of Sugriva. A bridge was built over the sea and Lanka was entered with Hanuman, Jambavanta and others.

In Lanka the asuras were killed with ease. Lakshmana killed Indrajit. Kumbakarna died in the hands of Rama.

Ravana came with pride and anger and fell an easy prey to Rama, who rode in the chariot of Indra. Mandodari the queen of Ravana came out then with grief and addressed Rama :

Sri Rama ! My husband heed'd not " words
From me and all advice ! I said : surrender
Sita, supreme, chaste, Thy queen and queen
Of universe ! Salvation is far off
From those that chase wives innocent and pure ! "

Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana and favourable to Sri Rama, performed the last rites to the departed souls and was made king of Lanka.

Saw Sri Rama his queen with matt'd hair,
Eyes swollen with tears, sore in grief and pain,
And body thin and held by hands so pale !
Rama accepted Sita from Fire with pride !

Rama, Sita, Lakshmana accompanied by Hanuman and others returned to Nandigrama and met Bharatha who was in readiness for the ensuing coronation of his brother returning from exile. All went to Ayodhya. Praises and rain of flowers greeted the victorious team returning to reign in the capital.

The streets were swept clean and each house had set
Planatains with flowering tops, and with
The thresholds decorated with drawings gay,
And festoons hung high up in highways grand,
And story of Rama writ bold on walls,
The subjects were awaiting their king great !
The temples held up domes of gold with lustre,
And pious prayers were offered to deities
And offerings were sent round all devotees !
And men and women, the little ones
All said one voice "O WELCOME SRI RAMA."

The infantry, the cavalry, elephants
And chariots drove and raised the dust of roads.
And last came flowery chariot bearing all :
The hero SriRama, Sita, Lakshman ;

Hanuman, Vibhishana just and kind;
And were cheered loud and dimm'd the ears for long!
The citizens waited to see Rama their king
As the stars high do wait to see the MOON!

Sri Ramachandra was placed on the throne with his queen according to the preceptor Vasishta's instructions. Rama reigned.

Rama ruled fatherly and his subjects all
Knew not want, pain, disease, death premature!
As Nature gave in plenty, peace lived there!
Rama had but one wife and taught the world
Existence truthful and faith in the Lord!

Her piety, affection, modesty
And sweetness were the talk of Ayodhya!
Sita knew that her lord in palace-home
Was lord to subjects of the kingdom vast!

One night Sri Rama was wandering in disguise and heard a man saying to another: "I shall not take back my wife like Rama who is fond of women. She was in another man's house" Rama realised he was king and at once knew what to do. Immediately he summoned Lakshmana and ordered removal of Sita, though big with babe, into a forest. This he did, to set a kingly example and righteous precedent.

In due course Sita delivered twins, Lava and Kusa, in the hermitage of Valmiki who reared the little princes.

One day Lava and Kusa came to the Hall of sacrifice of Sri Rama and sang the eternal epic of Ramayana.

The boys did sing song of Ramayana!
The faces of lustre, and the music sweet,
Did melt the heart of Sri Rama and tears
Did flow down the cheeks and chin and chest of him
That exiled Sita chaste! Now Sri Rama
Embraced the boys enquiring parentage!
The sons said "We hail from Valmiki"

Day after Valmiki brought home Sita
With Lava and Kusa and praised Rama
And said: "Rama! Sita is chaste! Take her!"

Sita heart-sticken, prayed to Sri Rama
And went into the Earth, her mother, sore!

Rama said weeping wild : "O dear Sita!
Thou hast left me! Show me thy face, thy eyes!
Let my ears hear thy words! thou vanished out!"

The king bore separation ill of queen!
Vishnu supreme was losing consort Sri!

Later Rama entered into the austere life, simple, and ruled Kosala for thirteen thousand years and returned to Vaikunta as the original Lord!

SKANDA X

Sri Krishna.

Sage Suka narrated the life and sport of Sri Krishna and Balarama in detail to king Parikshit.

The daityas were a burden to mother Earth. Siva, Brahma, and the Goddess of Earth in the form of a cow went to Sri Hari and prayed and explained the sad plight on earth. Mother Earth was in tears. Sri Hari told them that He would take an avatar and set right the matters. The deputation returned satisfied.

King Surasena ruled over the Yadavas in Mathura. He had a son Vasudeva who married Devaki, the daughter of Ugrasena. Happily the couple were going in a chariot driven by Kamsa, the son of Ugrasena, when a voice from the sky said: "O Kamsa! you will be killed by the eighth child of your sister whom you are now escorting in pomp!"

Kamsa was shocked and stopped the chariot in confusion and wanted immediately to kill his sister. The brother-in-law intervened: "You as brother should take pity. A brother gives to his sister clothes, presents and sumptuous dinners and always enquires sweetly. It may be that, my wife may bear your enemy. Please wait. Spare the woman. I implore you. As king you shall not do a wrong act lest the whole realm should go ill. Life is uncertain for any one. Please establish eternal fame for yourself by doing the right! I shall hand over to you all the children your sister delivers, though the eighth one is to be

your concern. Your sister and I wish you well!" Kamsa put down the outdrawn sword and spared his sister.

Kamsa learnt from Narada that the Lord would take human form and kill him, having sent already his aspects as Nanda, Vasudeva and others of his clan. He knew himself to be Kalanemi; but 'maya' deluded him.

Devaki bore yearly one son and thus six sons were born and relentlessly killed by Kamsa. The seventh pregnancy of the great mother was transferred to the womb of Rohini, who delivered in due course, Balarama (Samkarshana). The much expected eighth pregenancy arose in Devaki who shone in glory that was evident to every one around. She had actually pseudosiesis. Kamsa imprisoned his sister and brother-in-law this time. At the same time Yasoda, the wife of Nanda, was big with child. Both prospective mothers neared full term.

The devatas were aware of the imminent avatar and paid homage to Devaki and Vasudeva in invisible forms.

The Birth of Sri Krishna.

The universe was in all peace and joy!
The seas were swelling with foam of smiles!
A rain of flowers fragant came from sky!
The devas sang songs lilting set to dance!
The night was still and under Rohini,
The star divine; Devaki great slept deep,
And woke to find on floor a babe with light!
He had hands four with lotus, conch, disc, mace,
And with Kaustubha gem; wore saffron silk;
Had crown set with gems lustrous, and rings
In ears; and thus the Lord Vishnu was babe!
The Lord said to Devaki and Vasudeva:
"You were my parents before and now
You are once more my parents bless'd with ME!
See ME now! I become a human child!"

Vasudeva and Devaki prayed deeply. The father being in imprisonment, mentally made over gifts of ten thousand cows to deserving persons on this august occasion.

The Lord directed Vasudeva to go
To Vraja, kingdom of Nanda! The child

Was in the arms of father who went through
The doors of prison dark, that gave the way.
The guards slept snoring deep! Rain heavy pour'd!
Sesha with hood walked like umbrella on
The father and his child as they walked through
The surging waters of Yamuna wide!
There in Vraja, Yasoda slept with babe
Her own, 'yoga-maya', the girl, and then
Vasudeva put son in place of daughter soon,
And walked out silent, slow, and came to cell,
In time, and doors closed sharp! The mission end'd.

After Vasudeva deposited the girl baby beside his wife, she cried and thus woke up the slumbering sentry. Kamsa was informed of the birth of the eighth child to his sister immediately. Kamsa came and seized the baby from the arms of his mourning sister and threw it high up so that it would crash down to death. The baby instead of falling down soared up and said: "O fool! Kamsa! you have killed many little ones born to your innocent sister. Is this your valour? One who kills you is reared elsewhere!" and disappeared into ethereal regions.

Kamsa introspected and repented for a while. The next day he freed his sister and brother-in-law and fell upon their feet, apologising for all his cruelty and heinous infanticides. The magnanimous couple looked at the horrid man with sympathy and gave him a word of cheer and told him: "None can overcome destiny!" Vasudeva and Devaki went to their own kingdom and lived in peace thereafter.

Yasoda waking up found a son beside her and shared her joy with her husband Nanda. The parents named the child Krishna (black). The residents of Gokula paid their respects to the noble couple and blessed the boy who appeared extraordinary in every aspect. The child born of Rohini was named Balarama.

Once Nanda went to Mathura to pay homage to Kamsa and met Vasudeva who enquired very affectionately of the children and the rest of his family. Vasudeva advised Nanda to return home early and be guarded against foul play and treachery.

Putana goes to Repalle.

Kamsa invited a conference of his ministers and well-wishers and discussed the grave situation arising from the forecast of Maya Devi. The cruel men of the congregation talked of exploding the entire sky or pocketing the earth entirely.

The uneasy king summoned an asura Putana and entrusted her with the task of killing Krishna. The woman roamed about in the form of a beautiful mother and reached Nanda's house and saw the baby in the cradle. She hurriedly took the child to her breast in spite of remonstrances from Yasoda and Rohini. She suckled poison. The child sucked and drank from the breasts with avidity and soon drew the very life out of the woman, who fell down dead, in native shape causing horror and anxiety. Yasoda immediately took hold of her son and hugged him to her breasts.

Nanda reached home and saw the truth of Vasudeva's advice.

The death of Sakatasura.

Yasoda and Nanda saw their son turning sideward and celebrated the event with great joy. Guests came in numbers. Prayers were offered. Feasts were served and presents given to the holy men. The child was suckled and put to sleep by the mother who then was busily attending to the guests.

The baby cried suddenly and kicked up his legs. This was when Sakatasura came as a cart and tried to carry away the child. The cart (asura) was broken to piecees to the wonder of those that saw the scene in the end.

The end of Trinavarta.

One day Yasoda felt her child too heavy on her own lap and therefore left the baby on the ground.

An asura Trinavarta (whirlwind) came to kill the child. He blew fast and raised a terrible and blinding dust storm. Yasoda could not spot her son and was weeping helplessly with dust laden eyes and in the thick of the dust storm. The asura lifted up the child into heights and was about to drop him down. The weight of the child increased to such an extent as to overpower the asura who himself ultimately fell down dead. Krishna was safe with his victim.

The gopis witnessed the death of the asura and were surprised at the superhuman qualities of baby Krishna.

One day Yasoda was suckling her son to her satisfaction. The baby got sleepy and yawned. The mother looked into her son's mouth :

The universe was seen in mouth of babe !
The sky, the earth, the Sun, the Moon, the Fire,
The Air, the seas, the mounts, the streams, the woods,
And things that live and die were there in HIM !
The mother closed her eyes and said : "Thou God !"

The sport of Balarama and Krishna.

One day Garga, the sage preceptor of Nanda's family, came and informed the parents that Balarama was "Ananta" and Krishna was "Srimannarayana."

Maya continued. The children appeared like ordinary children to their parents.

Balarama and Krishna were together with mates in their play in and out of their house. Krishna went into other houses, disturbed the inmates, stole butter and ate it and distributed it to his friends and even to monkeys. The pet child sometimes earned complaints from neighbours who said :

O Yasoda ! your son steals butter from

Our homes ! We shall go to some other place !

To this Yasoda replied :

The child leaves not my bosom all the time !
He knows not way to go to other homes !
He is like babe just open'd his eyes out !
He knows not things beside his self and he
Plays in himself ! My child is one good boy !
O mothers sweet, and good, go to your homes !

One day the playmates and even Balarama complained to Yasoda that Krishna was eating mud. The mother drawing near the baby asked : "Did you do it, my dear lad ?" Krishna said : "No, mother, look into my mouth", and he opened his mouth" The mother saw in it the whole universe.

The mother saw the universe in full
In mouth of babe! She saw her husband good
And her own self, the cows, cowherds!
She said: 'Is this a dream or His maya?'

One day Yasoda was churning the curd: and when the baby came for feed, she started feeding him. She saw a pot of boiling milk overflowing, and to get it down she interrupted the feed and went to the oven. Krishna grew angry and broke the pot of curd and left the place. When the mother returned, she found the boy standing on a mortar in another place, and feeding a pet animal with curds. She expressed:

Is this a boy? He does things elders fear!
The boy is my one child! What shall I do?
When I talk hard to him, he says he would
Be good for all the time! He is in all
The homes! I shall teach him a lesson now!

The mother chased Krishna and caught hold of him and unable to punish him thought of tying him down in the house and said in humour:

Who is this gentleman? Art thou Krishna?
It seems Krishna knows not what butter is!
Thou knowest not to steal from houses here!
Thou hast no fear of waters deep at all!
Thou wilt ev'r try to lift a mount of size!
Thy joy is putting earth on thy own head!
Thou wilt not spare the posts gigantic large!
Thou hast asked trifles on occasions big!
Thou hast earned infamy by killing some!
Thy aim would go to bridge gap wide though hard!
Thy venture is to fight in strife all wild!
Thou wilt walk naked but in peace and joy!
Shall I not have the hold on thee, my son?

Yasoda tied him with a rope to a mortar and said: "Where will you now go?". She went then to attend to her own work.

Krishna draggged the mortar through two arjuna trees nearby and uprooted them. Immediately two angelic persons, Nalakubara, and Manigriva came from the trees, thus released

from former curse of Narada. The residents of Vraja saw this act and wondered very much.

Movement to Brindavana.

The elders in Gokula met and resolved to move to another place because of the many evils befalling them in Repalle.

The entire community removed bag and baggage to Brindavana, a woody resort with cliffs and plenty of pasture land. Brindavana appeared an ideal home with the mountain Govardhana beside the holy river Yamuna.

Krishna killed the asuras that came as 'Calf', 'Crane', and 'Serpent' to Brindavana with malicious intentions. These acts only showed to Gopas and Gopiwomen that Krishna was the surpreme Lord himself in guise, but the realisation was getting lost in 'maya'.

The cattle grazed in ease and drank healthy water and progressed happily. The men, women, and children were in peace and plenty in Brindavan.

The humiliation of Brahma.

After killing asura Agha, Krishna and his friends went to the river bank and led the calves to water and later allowed them to graze nearby.

The gay band of boys spread themselves around Krishna like lotus petals and began their fare culled from the bags they all carried.

The calves slowly drifted into distant woods and disappeared to the great consternation of the cowherds. Sri Krishna said to his mates: "Eat. Do not disturb yourselves. I shall fetch the calves." It was Brahma who carried away the calves and later the cowherd boys too to a secret place.

Brahma saw boy Krishna with feather of

> The peacock stood on the head! The locks of hair
> Flowed on ears! His arms were lotus like!
> One held a rod with cover'd gold; the other one
> Held ball of rice! He went in search of calves!

Sri Krishna understood the work of Brahma, and He himself became the missing calves and boys, identical to the last

little feature. The sons were loved by their parents, and the calves by cows at home for nearly one year.

One day Balarama perceived the grazing herd over the top of Govardhana but the calves were near Vraja. The cows chased towards the calves in a fit of maternal attachment inspite of the calves being older and weaned ones, and much to the disgust and anger of the adult gopas. The gopas ran after and saw the cows and found beside them the boys who changed anger into affection.

Balarama was thinking about the mystery. He said to Krishna: "These Gopas are no longer devatas and the calves rishis. They are like my dear Krishna!" Sri Krishna smiled and spoke the truth to his brother.

Brahma appeared on the scene and saw the calves and sons of Gopas but could not distinguish between the stock hidden by him and the substitute creation of Krishna. The misty dullness is swallowed by the night and the light of glow worm comes no where near the day. In fathoming the Lord, Brahma got deluded himself. Brahma saw once that each boy and each calf looked like Vishnu and shone in starry halo with crown and jewels, and adornments like conch, disc, mace and lotus; and immediately came to his senses. He prostrated before Sri Krishna and with tearful eyes prayed for forgiveness and praised the Lord.

I seek Thy pardon, Lord! The mother knows
The kicks of her unborn in womb as play!
Thou shalt think of my misdeeds as of Thy child!
I am from Lotus that was born of Thee!
Thou art Narayana, the Lord supreme!
Thou hast the universe in Thy mouth which
Yasoda saw with fright! Thou hast it so!
Thy sport, 'maya' hast shown as one and more
Of calves and boys at one and the same time!
Thou art Brahma, creator and the one
Protector safe, and the destroyer Siva!
Thou hast avatar in time, in man
Or beast, or bird, or other creature!
Thou art the SELF and knowing this takes time
For one who wades through life and death in turns!

May I have Thy bliss like those in Vraja ;
The women and cows were fed sweet by Thee with
Ambrosia rare to satisfaction full !
How fortunate are the residents here !
The asuras Thou killed are fortunate !
The Gopas and Gopikas are all bless'd !
Thy sport on earth is human and lends light !
Thy glory is far still from me, O Lord !
The universe is at Thy lotus feet !
One bearing 'karma' with resignation
In thought, word, and deed shall reach Thy feet !

The Ass.

An Asura (Dhenuka) roamed about as an ass in the forest of palm trees which Balarama and Krishna visited once. Seeing the asura charge fast and kick at with rear feet; Balarama caught hold of its feet and twisted it round and round till he died and threw his body up. The dependents of Dhenuka came out and met with death at the hands of the brothers.

The Kaliya serpent.

Sri Krishna and his mates went to a dreaded spot on the banks of the Yamuna. On that day Balarama remained at home.

The cows and boys went near a pool of water which was occupied by a venomous serpent Kaliya which killed all that came in its reach. The water he inhabited and the breath he let out were equally poisonous. That day the cowherd boys and calves drank the water from the poisoned pool and died instantaneously, but Krishna, no sooner brought them back to life by glances of his divine eyes.

Krishna got upon the branch of a Kadamba tree overhanging the pool and plunged into it with confidence. The viper charged on the intruder with ferocity and twisted round and stung him too. Krishna, knowing the whole story through spiritual vision, easily extricated himself and got upon the many-headed hood and stampeded in an inspired dance. The serpent vomited venom and blood and became enfeebled. The citizens of Brindavana including Nanda and elders collected on the banks of the Yamuna anxiously expecting Sri Krishna come out in glorious victory.

The wives and dependents of the serpent came up and prayed to the Lord for sparing their dear one and promising to become harmless immediately

O Lord ! save husband ours as Thou hast now
Set punishment on him, his due for sins !
Thy feet adorn the head of Kaliya
In thy dance sacred on his hood, that gods
Are seeing with prayers pure and we deserve !
The feet that great Lakshmi has prayed to nurse !
Have pity and save us, poor women sore !
We all abide by Thy advice and shall
Go into sea and leave Yamuna safe,
For Brindavan and its inhabitants !

The serpent being assured of protection from Garuda because of Sri Hari's feet imprinted on his hood, left for Ratnakara island.

Balarama remaining at home explained the sport of his brother, and predicted easy walk over in the strife against the viper. Nanda and Yasoda and other Gopas and Gopi women received Sri Krishna with tears of joy and sang praises to the Lord.

The story of Kaliya.

Kaliya hid himself in a pool of the Yamuna as he was under the wrath of Garuda for not offering him dues. As a rishi Saubhari cursed Garuda not to go near the same pool on account of the latter's disobedience, the rendezvous became safe for the serpent which flourished there

The Summer.

The summer at Brindavana was free
From heat and dearth of drink ! Days long and nights
Short, kept the ones in love lock long in sport !
The water falls fell with roars and the trees
Tall stood green, moist, and wafting breeze with scent
From lotus flowers ! The birds sang sweet ! The bees
In hum moved fast and peafowl danced in feast !
Krishna, Balarama, and Gopas went
With ease into the woods with joyous dress

And sang on pipe and jumped with tunes and went
In measured steps in ecstacy and bloom ;
The Devas joined as Gopas and had drunk
Of joy that flowed from Him who played on earth !

Asura Pralamba turned Gopa boy and bore
Balarama who crushed him dead in sport !

A forest fire spread flames to cows and boys
Who ran in agony wild and sought the feet
Of Sri Krishna who said : " Close eyes thine, now ".
They did and He ate fire in flood and saved
The herd and mates who praised : " Thou art God !

The Rainy Season.

The sky grew dark with clouds and lit with sparks
Of lightning and roared thunder down ! The sun
And moon were dim ; the wind tempestuous !
The sun returned the water drunk from earth !
At night fireflies showed glow but not the stars;
When clouds rode ov'r, as things mean rule in sin ;
The hibernating frogs raised croak with rain ;
The rivulets overflowed as men in wealth
And in intoxication of the flesh !
The earth, green, grassy, red, insect-habit'd
And exuberant with fungus, like the kings
In pomp and pride ; meant for change of season !
The fields had crops for men who worked in faith ;
But none for those that danced their time in waste !
The rain was sweet to life on earth, in water,
As the devotee at the lotus feet of Lord !
The rivers joining sea set into waves
Of consternation wide as in the mind
Of man, the slave desiring earthly joys !
The rain poured on the mountains which stood calm
Like men with mind on Sri Hari in Peace !
The paths became obscure as books not read !
The lightning fleet'd with clouds as women flirt'd
With men not knowing their depths of value !
The moon full lit peep'd not through clouds as SELF
Though lit lights not through veil of ego !

The trees grew up, the lakes and tanks filled up,
The birds lived on as men live blind to sin !
The tanks flowed out as books great get torn out !
The feeds of rains are like the acts of kings
For good of subjects through pure impulses !
The trees bore fruit plenty and ripe and sweet !
Krishna, Balarama, and boys joyed there
With cows and calves amid the woods in wealth
Of plants and fruit and honey and with birds
With songs of welcome and the echo mild
Of streams that ran through chasms and cliffs to plains!
The brothers and the mates took shelter cool
In caves and ate the food of curd and rice
With all; and saw the cows with udders big
Near calves in graze over meadows green at hand !
The Gopas worshipped Goddess Rain and then
They prayed to Sri Krishna, Balarama !

THEN SET IN THE AUTUMN.

The Autumn.

Clouds disappeared and water cleared and wind
Waft'd gentle; lotuses blossomed wide, as heart
On Sri Krishna emancipates from sin !
The clouds looked white like men free from desire !
The hills gave vent to streams in places, as lore
Is leaked by persons at their own will !
In water shallow, life was short and hot !
Land wet, became dry and saw growth of life !
The sea saw calm like realised soul after strife !
The tillers of the soil built bunds to store
The water earned, as those in quest of SELF !

The moon. cloud-free, did soothe the heat of day !
Krishna shone sweet amid his followers !
The autumn made women, cows, deer, birds
Big and soon pregnant as the natural
And mating season yield'd the fruit divine !
On earth went life with one and all aright !

Krishna sang music Vedic on his flute !
The Gopikas heard Him and ran to Him
With burning love and sang His praise and met

In mind the Hero exquisite of choice!
Face smiling and eyes casting looks of love,
With peacock feathers on the head and with
The flowers round the neck and clad in silks
The Lord held pipe to lips which fed nectar
Through it to overflow and quench the thirst
Of all in quest of Him! Thus they saw Him!
Some Gopikas said: "This Balarama,
Krishna are actors Godly, on earth:".
Some said: "The flute that feasts Brindavana
With songs is of bamboo whose parent plant
Is shedding tears of joy, and water sweet
That fed the plant is rippling in eclat!
How fortunate that plant and water pure!"
Some said: "The peafowl dance to tunes in lust!
The living creatures are love-struck and still!"
Some others said: "The deers in pairs do stand
At ease and offer looks of love to Him!"
"The consorts of high angles hear the songs
And faint upon their husbands with braids loose
And dress gone stray, and thus they get allur'd!
The forest women and Govardhana
Are both blessed full as each has touch of Him!"
"The clouds cast shadow to soothe Him from heat!
The rivers smile and offer lotuses fair!
The cows are lulled and stand with ears erect!
The calves forget to drink the milk in mouth!
The birds on trees are calm with eyes closed soft!
Brindavana is spot divine on earth!"
The Gopi women became His own!

The Chill and Dewy Season.

The northern winds grew strong, up in the sky!
The earth was held in grip of dewy cold!
The man finds saviour at the bosom warm
Of his wife dear who lends embrace that is
Twice blessed with conquest ov'r chills.
The moon is no longer a friend to us!
The sun rode not ov'r mountains long with mirth
But set soon in west misty and struck chill!

The crickets sat on water lilies op'n,
As smoke that sat on fire of love struck lives!

Krishna Hides the Clothes of the Gopikas.

With the advent of the chill misty and dewy season (Hemantha) the maids of Brindavana decided to pray to Goddess Katyayani for one month. After bathing in the waters of the Yamuna early in the morning, they all prayed to secure the boon, so that Sri Krishna would become husband to each one of them.

To Yamuna, the girls went out one morn
To bathe and dropp'd their dress on bank alone.
They played and talked in waters fresh and joyed!
Krishna came silent and stole dress of maids
That still kept bathing gay in beauty's wealth!
Krishna with Gopa boys walked, proud in steps
Of elephant in craze, with clothes of girls
And refreshed with breeze cool from Yamuna,
And climbed a Nepa tree with secret spoils!
The Lord of universe sport'd like a boy!

The girls said: "Lord! give back our clothes to us!
O king! rule world as just protector safe!
Save all like king lion in the forest wild!
Fight other kings and win in wars with fame,
And bear the words of preceptor in fear!
Thy acts shall earn fame eternal and high!
Do not do this to hide our clothes in stealth;
Return our dress as we have faith in thee,
Thou hast seen us and won our hearts at once;
Thy 'maya' deep is such for minds ours!
If not, we shall complain to king at once!
And each looked at the other, shy and chilled
By water that hid them in ripples cold!"
Krishna said: "Girls! You are now mine! Come up!
Take clothes of yours! you smiling faces of fun!"
The girls said: "O Krishna! do men go to
The women while in bath, and will any man
Steal dress of maids in bath? Know we are thine!"
Krishna said:" Whom have you loved full? Who has
Seen forms enticing yours? Speak out your love

At heart? Am I a stranger to you?
The girls looked at each other in smiles shy
And were stung deep with arrows of Cupid.
Krishna said: "Girls! Come to my place and hear
My words! I will give then your clothes! Come out!"
Some maids consent and some do not to rise
From river, but at last all those rose up
Waist deep with tender hands in jingles gay
Of bangled gems to hide their virgin zones!
Krishna said. "O fair ones! Why are you shy
With me who has played close as child with you!
I am in you all time, and is there one
Yours I know not in you? You pray and go
To bathe stark naked in Yamuna pure!
Is this your penance true? If you are strict
To prayers, lift your hands both up and you
Will have clothes from me without fail!".
The maids held hands together ov'r foreheads fair,
And Sri Krishna saw them and gave them their dress!
The maids praised Lord Krishna for helping them
To free from polluting Yamuna!
Krishna spoke: "Girls! your inner mind is
Now known to me! You all want me at heart!
Your prayer to Katyayani shall bear
You fruit! In nights to come, you shall have ME!"

The beautiful maids of Vraja were pleased with the result obtained and after feasting their eyes on Sri Krishna for long, they slowly adjourned homeward with immense satisfaction and joy.

Wives of the sages feed Balarama and Krishna.

Krishna went into the forest with his brother Balarama and other Gopas and spent time in the hot sun. Enjoying the refreshing shade of the trees the Lord said:

The trees do suffer from sun, rain and winds,
And do protect all things that come to them.
They give shade cool, fruit, flowers, foliage,
And bark, stem, and root with ease!
The trees thus justify their lives on earth!

The boys became hungry and requested the Lord for food. Krishna asked them to go to the Brahmins who were then performing Angirasa Yajna in a garden nearby and use the names of Balarama and Krishna and request for food. The boys did so to no effect; and returned without success because of the apathy of the brahmins who were absorbed in meaningless and endless rituals. Sri Krishna asked the disappointed Gopas to go back and appeal to the wives in the same place using His name. This attempt bore fruit.

The wives chaste attentive and kind to boys
Got hold of food and drink fresh, sweet and full
And ran to Him as rivers go to sea,
Though kith and kin held hands against them too!
The women saw Krishna blue, wearing silk
And garlands, jewels, earrings and in smiles
Of joy supreme and soon embraced the Lord
In mental horizon immaculate!
Thus they merged one with lotus feet of Lord!

Balarama and Krishna offered the good hosts seats and enquired of their welfare and then distributed the sumptuous meal they had brought to all the friends around and ate the same themselves with great pleasure. Krishna thanked the wives of the brahmins and advised them to go back home, and finish the yajna, and added that their husbands, brothers and others at home would receive them well. The Lord said :

You have reached me in mind with faith supreme!
A contact carnal is not need'd for bliss!
Surrender pure, devout, shall reach ME sure!

The women thus sanctified returned home and were welcomed by their husbands who repented for having missed a rare opportunity of realising the Lord in Krishna whom they worshipped secretly in houses because of fear of Kamsa.

The humiliation of Indra.

Sri Krishna asked Nandagopa, his father and others about the elaborate preparations that were being made for a yajna.

O father dear, what is this great eclat?
The father replied :

" My son, we are worshipping Indra who gives us
The rain and wealth of crops and cows.

Sri Krishna commented :

Things living or dead shall go by 'karma'
And Nature lays down path of action once !
None, not ev'n Indra high has sway ov'r things !
To Nature mute we shall pay homage high !
To cows and brahmins we shall offer food !

The father and other elders having agreed, Krishna initiated the offerings to Nature :

The cows and Gopas and Gopikas gay
Went round Mount Govardhana green !
Krishna took form of light and love of rare
Attraction, natural, and took offerings done
And said : "I am the Hill and Hill is ME !"

At this Indra became indignant and ordered the clouds to rain heavily, with thunder and lightning, and with hail stones. The men, women, and children and cattle ran in confusion at the unprecedented downpour aud went to Krishna with prayers for succour. The Lord heard everything and understood the unwise and foolish action of Indra.

Mount Govardhana was lifted by Krishna
Who said : "Get under this shield great in glee,
You are all safe, men, women, children, cows,
And calves ! The rain and wind and chill shall go !
It rained for days and nights, seven, with force ;
The mount was held in hand firm by Krishna !
Indra remorseful ran to Lord Krishna
And fell at His feet seeking pardon soon !
Krishna said to Indra : "I took thy strength
As I desire to help one blind with pow'r !"

Surabhi as Gopika praised Krishna
And bathed Him with milk ; Indra bathed Him
In waters holy from Ganga and thus
Krishna became "Govinda", the great, supreme !
The angels sang and danced in joy and praised
The Lord ; the cows poured milk on earth and streams

Of milk ran floods on earth and trees fed forth
Honey, and hills delivered gems ; and crops
Became spontaneous and in plenty !
The animals wild became soft, meek and mild !

The Gopas and Gopikas sang songs gay
In praise of Sri Krishna : O Lord ! Thou art
The God supreme ; but for us one small boy !
As babe Thou hast on breast killed Putana !
As babe Thou hast doomed down the asura Cart !
At year Thou hast with asura flown high
And killed him down with valour glorious !
As toddler Thou got down Arjuna trees !
Thou went through daitya Crane and tore him out !
Thou put down daitya Calf with ease at play !
Thou hast won ov'r asura Donkey as joke !
Thou ate the Fire which raged to burn Vraja !
Thy dance on Kaliya to bleed to defeat was one
Of joy to Gokula and cows and calves !
As boy of six and one Thou lift'd the mount !

Hearing all this Nanda narrated to the entire congregation that sage Garga had already told him that Balarama was Anantha and Krishna SriHari himself from Vaikunta, that have come down to Gokula for the alleviation of suffering humanity and to relieve the weight of sin on mother Earth.

Nanda rescued.

Nandagopa observed a fast on Ekadasi and before breaking the fast next morning, went to bathe in the Yamuna much too early and even in slight darkness. When he plunged into the river an asura took possession of him and took him over to the realm of Varuna. The Gopas seeing the disappearance of Nanda raised a hue and cry and informed Krishna of the sad occurrence.

Sri Krishna thereupon entered the kingdom of Varuna who received him with adoration :

Thou hast come here ! Lord ! welcome to Thee !
My heart and soul are at Thy lotus feet !
Thou ruler of the universe and King
Of Kings ! My man knows not Thy father dear

And brought him ov'r to me but pardon me,
My servant, and save us ! Thy father is
Safe here and honoured he shall be Thine !

Nanda returned home and described his experience to the Gopas who desired thereafter Sri Krishna to show them all His permanant abode as the Lord Supreme !

Sri Krishna one day took the Gopas through Brahmahrada, a pool in the Yamuna, and showed Sri Vaikunta to them. The Vaikunta, divine and glorious and ever in peace and bliss with vedic hymns sung to the Lord, was seen by the Gopas to their surprise and satisfaction.

The Autumn season comes again.

Krishna saw nights of autumn flavour'd with
The jasmins ; and the moon rose greeting slow
The horizon glowing crimson hue as one
In kissing his dear one on face does smear
The saffron after lapse of time and chance !
The rays of moon in mellow milky way
Did kindle Sri Krishna pour nectar-like
Through flute put to His lips that fed the world !
The Gopikas heard songs that flowed with love ;
And Cupid won their hearts at once with thrill !

The women of Vraja left milking cows,
Forgot the pots of grain and milk on hearth !
Left babes on breast, left food, ate not, served not,
Lost sight of husbands dear, and kith and kin !
Some had in hurry bathed and dressed in haste ;
And flavoured half their bosom with sandal ;
And had collyrium rude on the eyes ;
And matted hair in haste ; and with rings loose
In ears they all darted forth to Lord Krishna
As if resolved to meet their paramour !
Some women pent in homes prayed stern with mind
On Sri Krishna and joyed in mind embrace !

As friend or foe or as a relative close
Or in devotion deep one can reach God !
Sri Krishna said :

O fair ones! welcome here! Is Vraja safe?
Why did you all go here? It is night dark,
And animals wild roam this hour with roars!
Go back good ones, and serve each husband thine!
The work at home awaits each one at night!
Your love to me is love that all shall have!
The duty done to the husband, well or sick,
Is duty well done! If not one earns all sin!
The sight of wood in night moon lit on banks
Of Yamuna that feeds and grows trees,
Their foliage, flowers, flavour and fruit, sweet,
Feeds love to one and all, and you have come
To me forgetting duty at home right, chaste!
See ME, hear ME, think ME, sing ME, and I
Am thine; and this is truth divine and pure!
The women of Vraja wept, sighed, and spoke:
"Krishna, speak not words hard! we gave up all
And came with faith in Thee; accept us now
For service at Thy feet as Lord of all!
The husband, home and child lead us to work
Perpetuating the round of births and deaths!"

Sri Krishna smiled and pitied and gave the Gopikas His company.

The Gopikas surrounded Krishna who shone
Like moon in the midst of stars in heaven bright!
The Lord sang, danced, and played with Gopikas!
To sands of Yamuna Krishna moved on!
The breeze blew rich in flavour of jasmins!
The water rippled in exuberance!
He looked Gopika each, smiled, played, and touched
The head or curls of hair, the bosom soft,
The hands or waist or thighs or shoulders round!
Thus He gave each delight that made them all
Forget their state and think in pride with love
On carnal plane infuriating blind!

At this Lord Krishna suddenly disappeared from the midst of the sporting women.

The women wandered wide in woods with weight
At hearts like elephant queens left by king,

Entreating trees, plants, birds, deer, flowers, fair,
Of Krishna that went from their midst that way!

Of hue blue, lotus-eyed and with the head
Adorned with peacock feathers in the hair,
With smiles on face and raining love allround,
And he has stolen the wealth of lust of maids!
O bush with aroma sweet, tell us if He
Is hiding behind you in Godly sport?
O Tulasi! thou art at feet of Lord.
Did thou spy Sri Krishna dear to thy heart?
O mother Earth! the fruit of thy prayer pure
Is borne in joy as His feet lotus-like
Leave prints on thee for us to kiss and taste!

Deeply overcome by the separation of Krishna at the zenith of their attachment, the Gopiwomen sang praises of Him and searched long in the forest for Him. Later they began to act like Him!

The killing of many asuras was acted. The love-making and singing and dancing were all reproduced by the women between themselves, in dramatic ecstasy. Walking along they noticed in the divine foot prints of Krishna which when followed at length were mingled with those of one maid.

The Gopiwomen studying the disposition and depth and varied contour of the footprints of Krishna expressed:

Krishna has plucked jasmins at bower here
He carried her here and paced with weight on Him!
He set the hair at knot and kissed, but she
Has bent in His embrace; and now ov'r here
Both have stood face to face, as per foot prints!
Krishna and his one chosen slipped at this!
One ran out of hold of other here!
The two ran following close and warm ov'r here!
The foot prints here form path that books do sing
As marks to guide all those in search of God!
Thy marks are those wherein lives Sri Lakshmi!
Thy favourite prayed: "O Krishna! take me
On Thy back soon, my feet are sore with pain!"
Krishna bent down to hold the woman proud,
But went out of sight before she climbed!

Then, fair and tired, the maid ran mad in woods
And met her mates in common search of Him !

The Gopiwomen seeing the waning moonlight settled to the sandy banks of the Yamuna in despair. They prayed to Krishna forgetting all about their homes and hearths.

The Songs of Gopiwomen.

Vraja our home is blessed by Thee ! Lakshmi
Is here with Thee, and we are blessed by Her !
Thy eyes do not see us ; the eyes that pale
The blades of Autumn lotus in lake clear !
From asuras and storm and fear, O Bull
Of pow'r Thou hast saved us ! Thou art not son
Of Yasoda ! Thou art in loving hearts !
Krishna ! Thou art response to Brahma's prayer !
Thy hand that leans on bosom of Lakshmi
May bless our heads and save from life and death !
Do show Thy lotus face that wins ov'r pride
And cheers the good ! We pray to see Thy face !
Thy feet may stamp on bosoms ours and save !
Thy looks, Thy words, Thy fame and glory great
Do live in our hearts ! Come out ! O Lord !
Thy walk in morn with herds would hurt Thy feet
As weeds and stones may wound them harsh to pain !
By eve when Thou came back Thy face is dimmed
With curls of hair rich with the dust from feet
Of cows that finds deposit on Thy head !
O Lord ! grant us ambrosia from Thy lips
Through flute that hast bliss first ; and it drives out
The sorrows and rejuvenates with joy
The minds of human lives that bow to Thee !
The time Thou art not seen by day is long
And hard to bear ; and we forsake our ones
At homes and trust Thee firm and now O Lord !
Be kind and come to us in smiles, with love !
Thy feet which walk amid the cows may rest
On breasts of ours that surge with love for Thee !
Leave not in middle forest thick ; we wait !
Our pride is gone, O Lord, Krishna ! we wait !

Krishna appears before Gopiwomen.

As soon as Sri Krishna appeared beside them, each of the wailing and waiting women felt a renewed existence.

One woman pressed His lotus hands to hers!
One woman crossed His arm on her neck bent!
One woman took ov'r a kiss from His lips!
One woman placed His foot on her own breasts!
One woman looked daggers at the Lord in lust!
One woman looked still and feast'd at His lotus feet!
One woman held Him, embraced in mind all time!
All women sore at disappearance settl'd
To sands of Yamuna which fed breeze cool!
The moon rained rays of silver soft on them!
The women spread their upper cloths on sand
And on it sat Krishna in centre near,
While they did nurse His lotus feet and hands!
The women asked the Lord:

Some help those that go to them with a quest!
Some help those who do not come with a need!
Some mind not both the types of men on earth!
The Lord replied smiling:

Help mutual is selfishness in both!
To help unasked is virtue pure aud true.
Those blind to ones in need and not in need
Are selfish or too full or low and mean!
I am not in all groups thus far describ'd!
I am with you though you do not see ME!
O women chaste! your devotion bears fruit
In itself pure as you have lost the ties
Of homes; and sure surrender'd in love deep!

Rasakreeda.

Sri Krishna, the Lord of yoga maya indulged in Rasakreeda.

The Gopi damsels ringed around Krishna,
Each linking other's hands, and moved in dance!
Krishna appeared in between two with smiles
And each Gopi felt proud with Him beside,
With arms around her neck attached with lust!

The angels and their consorts fair came out
In sky to see the dance divine and rained
Their worship of flowers rare and sang
The praise of Narayana now Krishna !

The dancing beauties set to music sweet
Their own bangles, anklets, and jewels bright
That moved in rhythm of their own in time,
And Sri Krishna in lustre shone midpoint !
Brows twisting ; smiles adorning ; ear rings lit ;
Faces starred with sweat ; braids knit ; waists light :
Their bosoms in manoevring enchantment ;
Their feet in strides of magnetic movements ;
The paragons were lightning-like with Him !
The joy of women with Krishna was height
Of glory musical and dance and mirth !
The women tired and sweat flowed down their faces !
The jasmins fell from braids ; the bangles dropped !
One woman threw her arms around Krishna !
One woman caressed His hands soft and lost !
One came close to His lips that kiss'd sweet !
One woman felt her bosom pressed by Him !
Each one thus sang in dance with him to tunes
Of bees that hummed while He played as a child !
The women lost their holds and loosen'd in zone !
The angels lost their bearing at sight great !
The moon stayed long in sky with eyes of glee !
Each Gopi had Him chaste who cared for all !
The Gopis sang the praise of Lord in love !

The party went to bathe in the waters of the Yamuna and get refreshed after an exacting drama which was witnessed and worshipped by gods and goddesses from Heaven.

Jalakreeda.

The damsels fair and Lord Krishna got down
Into the waters of Yamuna clear ;
As elephant king plunges deep with queens
In heat and darts and dash's in strength and sport !
The flowers on land and in water lent
The breeze cool fragrance sweet, and bees in hum
Sang near the bathing beauties in moon light !

The eyes of women young looked like fish darts ;
Their faces with curls of hair in front were lit :
Their bosoms panting passionate with lust,
Appeare'd like loving birds in shape of globes !
The damsels of Vraja had feast of love ;
As Lord Krishna kept continent sublime !
As morn came near the women left the Lord !
King Parikshit exclaimed :

Sage great, Suka ! Is not Krishna at fault,
While living with the wives of other men ?
The sage replied :

The fire does quench all things, and is no wrong.
The ocean of milk churned bore poison dark,
And Eswara alone could drink the draught !
The weak ones shall not go astray at all !
To one that lives in Gopas and Gopis,
And evident in all the universe,
Who are the women strange or new to Him ?
The gopas saw their wives with them all time ;
And found no fault with Sri Krishna for sport ;
His sport is thus 'maya' sublime and pure,
One learning this shall conquer passion base !
At break of day, the damsels lost in love
Depart'd to homes not willing, but for work !

Sudarsana relieved of his Serpent shape.

On the banks of the Saraswathi the Gopis and Gopas were offering prayers to Siva and Durga one day. That night a serpent swallowed sleeping Nanda who cried in helplessness "Krishna ! Krishna ! help !" At this the Gopas branded the animal who was having Nanda inside his huge mouth. The Lord heard the cries, came to the scene, and touched the monstrous viper with His divine feet. The serpent became the beautiful Vidyadhara gandharva Sudarsana and immediately relieved Nanda to the great joy of the Gopa congregation. Sudrasana exclaimed :

My salutations to Krishna ! the Lord
Of universe ! I was a Gandharva
Who jeered at sage Angiras in my pride

And was then cursed by him to lie as snake !
I prayed to earn emancipation soon !
The sage spoke Thy avatar now for help !
Thus Thou hast now redeem'd this sinner mean !
My gratitude is for eternity !

Sankhachuda killed.

Balarama and Krishna went into the forest and the enchanting music that flowed from them attracted as usual the entire universe including the Gopi women.

Sankhachuda, a follower of Kubera, kidnapped the entranced women of Vraja and drove with them away in a northern direction. The women cried out for Rama and Krishna who chased the mean fugitive. The horror-stricken driver left the weeping women and ran for life ; but having kept Balarama in charge of the helpless women, Krishna killed the man with his powerful fist and collected a lustrous jewel from the victim and presented it to Balarama.

The Gopiwomen parting from Krishna sang with heavy hearts :

During the day the Gopi women think of Sri Krishna's deeds and of the divine music from his flute and describe the same amongst themselves.

The celestial couples passing high above in the firmament witness the nocturnal scenes of splendour and get victimised by Cupid. The women get lost in love and look amazed and with their attires slipping out of position.

This Nanda's son, sweet child, smiles, sounds his flute,
And cows and bulls, and deer all congregate
Allured by songs that flow from Him and they
Forget to graze or drink as pictures paint'd on screen.
The rivers cease to flow but kiss in ripples ;
The peafowl dance in joy ; the trees with fruit
Bend down and honey rains from them ; and bees
Hum, sing, and wind round Tulasi garland
On His neck lustrous and His face with light
Of halo and enticing Tilaka !
Why does the sun lead day in light so long ?

Brahma knows not to abolish the days
And prolong the nights all time on earth !
Will not the nights of sweet ambrosial love
With him persist and help the women weak !
When will the sun set down ? When will Hari
Come home with cows ? When will Krishna see us ?
When will the Lord lend shield to us from pain
Of arrows of love secret stinging sharp !
The moments separating Him are ages !
The Gopiwomen say at eve " The sun
Does set ! Light dims ! Krishna walks home with cows !
This way we meet the Lord at nights in woods ! "
Fair women love-burnt meet Sri Krishna who sees
Them gay to tunes of His with love and joy ! "

Narada meets Kamsa.

Sri Krishna killed an asura (Arishta) in the shape of bull and earned the gratitude of the Gopas.

One day when King Kamsa was in court the wandering sage Narda visited him and advised him thus :

That girl was daughter of Yasoda, who rears
Now boy Krishna, the son of Devaki,
Whom thou shalt know at once as Lord Hari !
Balarama is son of Rohini !
The boys come to kill thee ! They killed thy spies !

Kamsa thundered at Vasudeva : " This man hid his son. Kill him ! " Narada intervened to spare Vasudeva and subsequently disappeared into heaven. The enraged king imprisoned Devaki and Vasudeva. Kesi was ordered to do away with Balarama and Krishna. The ministers were summoned to think out the ways and means of killing the boys described by Narada.

Chanura and Mastika, famous for wrestling abilities, were advised to kill the boys in a wrestling match for which an arena and galleries, were to be got ready. The mighty elephant Kuvalayapeeda was to be placed at the gates with instructions to the mahout to drive him and to do away with the brothers Rama and Krishna. Further a huge Bow-sacrifice was ordered by Kamsa.

Kamsa called for Akrura, a respected Yadu and said :

My friend, the devatas prayed hard to bring
Hari as one Krishna, now son of Devaki
And living at Vraja and with Rama !
Go to Vraja and get my homage due
From Gopas and bring both the boys with thee
Inviting them for sacrifice of ours !
Take chariot and fetch the boys at once !
The elephant at gates may kill the lads !
If not, the wrestlers strong will see their way !
Then will I kill Vasudeva and old
Ugrasena and his next Devaki,
And other enemies and then my path
Shall be free from the thorns of foes on earth !
Dear Akrura, that is my plan to reign
With friends like Jarasandha, Dvivida,
And others, and live roaring like a lion !
Akrura thoughtful and godfearing said :

O King ! thy plan is made by thee with hope !
The ways of God are unknown, certain too !
I will go to fetch Balarama and Krishna !

At Vraja Krishna in the mean time killed Kesin and Vyoma, the asuras appearing as horse and gopi respectively.

Akrura comes to Brindavana.

Akrura said to himself :

" What deeds and gifts, munificence, 'tapas'
Of mine has borne fruit great this day ? O Lord !
Saints mighty did pray to reach Thy feet !
Kamsa as friend direct'd me to invite
Krishna, Balarama, though motivat'd !
Will Lord Krishna receive me friend or foe ?
What luck awaits this soul of status low
At Brindavana, I do not know but I
Will fall at His feet divine for relief !
Will Sri Krishna place his palm on my head,
The palm that shelters souls afraid of time,
The viper venomous that races fastest !

Thus thinking in his chariot Akrura reached Gokula by the evening.

Akrura, good, got down his chariot grand
As he saw the footprints of Sri Krishna
On earth and felt in him a thrill of joy
With tears in eyes and stood with hands enfold'd !
At pious place Vraja, Akrura saw the boys
Balarama, Krishna, the hallow'd forms !
He fell at feet of Sri Krishna with joy
That choked, with tears in eyes and kept in peace !
The Lord embraced the guest of honour dear !
Rama drew him near him and with hands round,
Inquiring of the journey and gave seat,
Respecting him in affection royal rare,
And washed his feet and gave curd with honey !
A dinner sumptuous was for Akrura
Arranged with pomp and love and good Nanda
Spoke words endearing long to envoy good !
The hosts spread sandal soft on him and gave
The flowers fragrant and betel and nuts
And smiling sweet Nanda said : "Akrura !
Can life prevail in us in reign of King
Kamsa who killed his kinsmen without shame ?"
Akrura was thoughtfully reticent and Krishna hailed :

"Art thou well ? How are friends and relatives ?
How goes thy race ? How are Vasudeva,
And Devaki, put into prison due to my birth ?
Have parents kind giv'n one cheer secret sweet ?
What pangs of separation sore they felt ?"

Akrura replied calmly the objeet of his visit and narrated how Narada had intimated Kamsa about Krishna being the son of Vasudeva and being reared by Nanda in Vraja. He continued : Balarama is revealed as the son of Rohini. Kamsa intimidated thus pounced upon Vasudeva to kill him, but Narada himself intervened and said : "O King! wait. The person that would kill you is Krishna". Thereafter Kamsa has evolved a plan of dealing with you, divine brothers. He proposes to do a Bow-sacrifice with great splendour and invite his subjects including Nandagopa, and you brothers. At

Mathura during the activities connected with the sacrifice, the king has planned, in his wickedness, on your divine lives ! "

Hearing this Balrama and Krishna laughed and informed Nandagopa, who prepared to go to Mathura with the king's dues and gifts.

Akrura accompanied Krishna to Mathura.

The lamentations of Gopiwomen.

The Gopiwomen felt disconsolate at the thought of Krishna's separation. They grew thinner, paler and ran down in agony of feverish love and even wept openly. They expressed :

The call from Mathura did turn His mind off
From us, poor rustic folk with love for ev'r !
One, Akrura, with cruel heart, won Him !
And Sri Krishna is going to maids new
In capital ; and will they leave Him free ?
Shall we stop Akrura ? Or pray to God
To stop the journey ? What shall we do ?

Next morning Krishna got ready and took leave of the residents of Vraja including the Gopiwomen who were visibly moved at the parting. Nanda and Gopas and the divine brothers started for Mathura in various chariots headed by Akrura. The women stood still and saw the cars disappearing as specks and finally getting lost in the dust raised in the rear, and they plodded wearily homeward with unwilling steps.

Akrura's Experiences on the way.

Cool breezes were blowing from over the crystal clear waters of the Yamuna. Krishna went to the river and quenched his thirst and returned to the chariot. Akrura, saluting the brothers, got down and went to the holy river for the timely prayers.

Akrura plunged into the waters and offered prayers. While in the water he saw the divine brothers, but not believing what he saw, he got out of the water and looked at the chariot which bore the same two brothers. Again Akrura plunged himself into the water and once again he saw the two figures being praised by siddhas, gandharvas, and suras.

Sesha was white in form and wore cloth blue,
Had thousand hoods and crowns, and on his lap
Sat one form blue with yellow silk and crown
On head with halo bright around the form!
The face was bright with smiles and eyes like blades
Of lotus and cheeks in full and lips of red
And nose and ears of contour prominent,
And neck and arms and shoulders well formed fair,
And chest adorned with SriLakshmi the great,
And with abdomen sumptuous, and thighs
And legs well formed, and strong, and feet and toes
Inviting worship from the universe!
The Lord is He and wore thread sacred and gems
In jewels fine around the neck and arms.
The Kaustubha was shining bright on chest.
And garlands floral hung on the neck smooth!
The lotus and conch and mace and disc were in
His hands and He was praised by Brahma and
Iswara great, and saints and Brahmins pure
And Prahlada, Narada and gods great!
This vision, Akrura, in water saw
And sang the praises of Lord devot'd and calm!
As ancient person Godly, Thou art here!
The lotus bearing Brahma rose from Thee!
The elements and maya are from Thee!
The realised souls great know Thee as one
From whom does emanate all things on earth!
The worship to God Iswara and that
To others does reach Thee, as rivers go
To sea though born of mountains high and fed
By rains in path circumlocutory!
Thy face is fire; Thy feet the earth; Thy sight
Is sun; Thy navel is the sky; Thy ears
The points in main; Thy head is Heav'n; Thy
Arms gods; Thy stomach seas; Thy might the air;
The hair the herbs; Thy curls the clouds; Thy bones
The mounts; Thy winks as day and night; Thy force
The rain; Thy reproduction Brahma great!
Thy avatars establish good and end
The sin! My salutations to Krishna!

The dream of family, the mirage of
The joys in it entice this man: save me!
I fall at Lotus feet of Thine! save me!

Seeing the blessed scene disappearing in the waters of the Yamuna, Akrura returned and sat in the chariot. Krishna asked him: "Did you experience anything extraordinary." Akrura said in ecstatic joy: "Yes, my Lord! I have seen Thee in the waters. I see Thee and in Thee lies everything else!"

The party from Vraja reached Mathura by sunset when Akrura invited them to his house. Sri Krishna said that he would visit him without fail after attending to Kamsa, the enemy at the earliest.

Sri Krishna in Mathura.

Akrura informed the king of the arrival of Rama and Krishna at Mathura. Mathura was beautiful, wealthy, and well-fortified.

Balarama and Krishna and Gopas went through the royal road. The citizens were flocking in crowds to see the new visitors. The women folk particularly, neglecting their round of domestic duties, came out of their houses and thronged with eager eyes and gazed at the charming brothers. The women exclaimed amongst themselves referring to Sri Krishna:

Is it this boy that sucked the life out from
The breast of asura with ease and joy?
Is it this boy that showed to Yasoda
The universe great, grand, in His mouth small!
Is it this boy who stole the butter, curd,
And filled his mouth and fed his mates with mirth?
Is it Krishna that stole the dress of maids
In Gokula as they were bathing lone?
The boy is joy of land and one without
His love lives life of dry and useless days!
How fortunate are the maids of Vraja,
Who see Krishna, and sing and dance with HIM!

Thus the women of Mathura were captivated by the exquisite beauty of Krishna. The citizens and particularly the learned ones offered gifts and flowers and fruit to the beaming brothers going in the chariot into the heart of Mathura.

Now a washerman with his load of washed clothes came near the visitors and Krishna desired to take some of them. The man spoke insolently and refused to respect the demand. Thereupon Krishna ended him and took hold of the entire bundle. The brothers wore suitable dress and distributed the remaining amongst the Gopas following them.

A weaver came across and gave the best of his manufacture to Rama and Krishna, who wore them with dignity and walked like young elephants blessing the donor.

The brothers went next to Sudama, a florist who adored them and gave them the choicest flowers as garlands neatly done. They wore them with pleasure and desired to give him a boon. The florist said in reply:

Do grant me service at Thy lotus feet;
Do grant me love for Thy devotees with light;
Make my heart full of human love to all
Thy creatures big and small of universe!

Sri Krishna granted his boon and blessed him and his race with longevity and fame.

The brothers were proceeding further and spied a beautiful girl with a spinal deformity. She was carrying a vessel full of flavoured unguents for King Kamsa. Krishna accosted the girl known as Kubja who immediately offered her fragrant gift and the brothers smeared the unguents on their skin. Krishna shining resplendently pressed upon the toes of the deformed girl with His divine feet and extended her chin with His holy hands and immediately Kubja became a beautiful maid. At this Kubja said to Krishna with joy:

O Hero! come and be with me at home!
Appease my thirst for Thee as I am won!

Sri Krishna laughed and said that he would certainly visit her house after more important duties.

The brothers progressed through business places where at the citizens gave them presents of sandal, betel, nuts, and flowers.

Sri krishna then marched into the Hall where the great bow intended for worship in the ensuring Bow sacrifice, was kept, and broke it into pieces in spite of the objections raised by the

guards on the spot. That looked like an elephant weilding a sugar cane. Those that intervened were also killed. Thereafter they retired for the night.

Kamsa was informed how the bow went into pieces in Krishna's hands.

The Night.

Kamsa had a dreamy and troubled night.

The King saw lights as doubly lit and his
Own shadow headless and with holes and his
Own foot prints absent and heard not his breath !
The trees were made of gold in his dreams mad !
He bathed in oil and wore red garlands and
Drank poision and walked nude and lone and rode
An ass and then in dream embraced dead ones !
Kamsa saw the eve of life ; and death in sight
And close ; and was in agony, dark and deep !

The Next Day.

The day dawned with great preparations for the wrestling match in an arena specially decorated. The galleries were full with visitors of various grades and the combatants and sportsmen. Kamsa sat in his royal seat though with an aching heart. Balarama, Krishna, and Nandagopa as also the affectionate Gopas arrived and offered their presents to Kamsa and sat in a separate gallery.

Kuvalayapeeda.

Kuvalayapeeda the mighty elephant, stationed at the entrance with evil intentions was easily overcome, and killed by Krishna and as token of the victory he carried the tusks of the victim to the gallery over-looking the arena.

A ruler of subjects full of love deep ;
A friend to Gopas gay, a champion to
The sportsmen strong ; reformer strict for all ;
Companion guileless to folk simple and good ;
The light to seekers in His search ; a child
To mother, and father dear ; the God of love
To damsels fair with lust ; Krishna appeared.

The citizens of Mathura were expressing about the young and beautiful brothers in low voices :

Balarama, Krishna, these are the Gods
From Vaikunta that live in Gokula,
And they come here to end the evil ones
And save the just in traits of grief and set
The universe to path of righteousness !

About Sri Krishna the people whispered :

Krishna destroy'd asuras sent by King !
On hand He bore the mount as shield for days !
Krishna, one boy, was with each Gopi girl !
Thus He is God and not just one gopa !

Chanura the famous wrestler prattled to Krishna :

Do not swim depths of water in pride vast !
Do not bear weight of mount for length of time !
Do not dive down in ocean blue as play !
Do not parade as lion of men on earth !
Do not enlarge before the eyes of men !
Do not kill kings, as one on earth supreme !
Do not go into woods in search of one !
Do not think one of light supreme in world !
Do not think cleverest on face of earth !

Mathura is this place, and not thy home
Of Vaikunta with peace and joy to thee !
The court of Kamsa is this spot and not
Thy choice of mendicants with none for them !
This arena will teach tune of my arm strong,
And not the palace where Narada sings !
This is the platform wrestlers hurl with knack,
And not the river bank for loving girls !
This is not path for saints to come and go !
The mind is not for corner old of saints !
The place is not for walk of poor devotees !
Thou shalt meet me, this day with mind on end !

The women in the vast assembly were whispering among themselves that the court wrestlers were herculean, and that the whole show was unfair as young and tender boys from Gokula were made to meet elderly and stronger rivals.

Krishna fought with the wrestler long and with tenacity and ultimately killed him. Similarly Balarama killed Mastika as an eagle does away with a viper. Also other wrestlers were done to death soon. The people witnessing in the various seats of the galleries shouted with joy, congratulating the young victors. Kamsa sank with sorrow and anger and stopped the show at once and exclaimed desparately :

Now banish sons of Vasudeva who is false !
Tie down the Gopas ! Confine Nanda soon !
My father Ugrasena and Vasudeva
Shall be put to death quick ! They are my foes !

Krishna pounched upon Kamsa, struck with fear,
And gripped his hair on head and threw him down
To arena wide ; and lo ! the king fell down !
The gems from crown of king dropped down to floor
As stars fall down from sky at deluge deep !
The king of bhojas saw his death at hand
And felt too poor to fight ! A spark from him
Came out and went into Krishna the Lord !
Kamsa did think Krishna as foe all life !
The king still had the bliss from Him at end !
Balarama met brothers of Kamsa
And killed them all with ease, as eagle high
Does snatch the snakes in swoops with grandeur great
Sage Narada came singing soft ' Krishna '.

From heavens Brahma and Iswara and other gods rained flowers upon Balarama, and Krishna, while the gandharvas sang pleasantly. The assembly broke with praises of the great saviours. The vassals and asuras ran in fright from their seats in the galleries.

Sri Krishna saw the queens of Kamsa who came out weeping and wailing, and consoled them. He advised the performance of the last rites due to the departed.

Balarama and Krishna released Devaki and Vasudeva from bondage, and prostrated before them. Krishna said :

No child can pay back dues to parents dear !
We were kept out ! Do pardon us for sin !
A son that treats his parents ill shall eat

His flesh in hell ! A man that does not help
Parents. wife, child and preceptor and saints,
Brahmins, and those in need is like one dead !

The avataras looked very human and they were embraced by the blessed couple with tears of joy.

Ugrasena was made king of Bhojas. The exiled persons were braught back and reinstated. Mathura became prosperous and peaceful once again. Sri Krishna took leave of Nanda and the Gopas who returned to Vraja very much grieved at the separation.

Vasudeva performed the Upanayana of his sons under instructions from sage Gargi and initiated them into Brahmacharya. The boys were put into the charge of Sandipini, a respected teacher belonging to Kasi and living in Avanti. They learnt in sixty four days all the knowledge pertaining to ancient and philosophical lore, political and legal literature, military strategy, and many other technical secrets necessary for the ruling royal race.

The great teacher was pleased with the achievements of his divine wards, who on the request of the Guru, restored back the dead son of the master from the realm of Yama.

Balarama and Krishna returned to Mathura—

Sri Krishna sends Uddhava to Vraja.

Elderly and respected well-wisher Uddhava was chosen by Krishna to go to Vraja and inform the parents, Gopas and Gopi women about his affection and good wishes for them. Uddhava reached Vraja by sunset and was received by Nanda with open arms and respected and fed and nursed to comfort. While the guest was reclining in relaxation Nanda said :

Does dear Krishna remember us, O Sir ?
Vraja, the Gopas, and Gopi maids good,
The cows, the hill, and Brindavana gay
Are waiting for the boy ! will He come back ?
His form and deeds are green with Yasoda
And me and others too ! They were little ones
In Gokula, but are not They Gods ?

Yasoda wept with breasts in dribbling milk !
The mother hast been kindled by the thoughts !

Uddhava replied :

O parents bless'd ! Krishna comes back too soon !
You are the Godly souls ! You know the Lord !
Krishna the one supreme is God who has
No kith and kin and none inimical !
The child sweet, dear to you, will go here soon !

The Gopi women saw Uddhava, the messenger of Sri Krishna, of beautiful form and dressed in silks and of pious disposition. The women of Vraja bashful and smiling went near him and said :

Does Sri Krishna remember us, those that
Gave up the husbands, children dear, for Him ?

The Gopi women said, seeing a humming bee :

" O bee ! sing not at us thy song ! He is
Like thee, that drinks from flowers sweet and quits
Them empty of the nectar and draws out
From lips of loving ones in Gokula !
Are we any where near great Lakshmi that waits
At lotus feet of Lord Krishna ? He is
One pow'r supreme and worshipped by us all !
O bee ! quit me ; I know thy tactics for peace now ;
Why art thou taking us to Him who hast
At bosom soft Lakshmi ev'r waiting true !
Does He remember us in Mathura ?
Does He speak of us, rustics of Vraja ?
When will He put round His arms on our necks ?

Uddhava heard all these expressions and was pleased with the complete surrender and utter devotion of the Gopi women and spoke out the message of Sri Krishna thus :

" Your dedication full, complete to me
Is known and distance long is not a bar
For union of myself with you ! I am
With all those whose thought, word, and deed are set
On me unconditional, and free and true ! ".

Uddhava lived for some months in the place of Nanda who treated him with great affection and expressed his natural and deep love to the divine brothers. He took leave of Yasoda

Nanda, and Gopi women and started to Mathura with the thought:

May I be one tree, bush, or creeper green
In Brindavan, and have the dust of feet
Of Lord on me all time, and thus have bliss
That Gopi women have or great Lakshmi
Or Iswara or Brahma prays to earn!

Kubja.

Krishna went to the house of Kubja, (Trivakra cured) accompanied by Uddhava.

Krishna went to Kubja that dealt in salves,
But now was like Mohini on earth
And lived in royal way of luxury!
Her house was neat and furnished rich
And decorated gay to receive her love.
Kubja knew not the sporting man as God,
Whose love is deep for all in universe!
Krishna was seat'd and Uddhava honour'd!
The girl had bath, and dress and jewels bright
And smeared with pigment smelling sweet to suit
Complexion fair and eyes, skin, hair and nails:
Appeared before Him with smiles and looks shy
As meeting first the lover that came late!
She offered salve, fruit, flowers, drink and look'd
At Him with betel green and nuts in hand!
He drew Kubja by hand, placed her on bed,
And won her own to her delight and fill!
He gave her bliss again and thus again!
The girl embraced the Lord and then forgot
The pangs of love in bliss so rare with Him!
The maid asked Him to quench her thirst of flesh
And not the state supreme asked by saints!
Krishna was hers and poor Kubja did lose
Her chance of getting bliss eternal rare!
This is like one in darkness that knows but
The light of glow worm and not light of day!

Kubja desired Krishna to live with her some more days in joy; and the Lord granted her the boon and also many presents.

Later Uddhava and Krishna departed to the residence of Akrura.

Akrura.

Akrura received the holy guests with due honour and identified Krishna as the Lord supreme of Vaikunta. Krishna offered in return praises to Akrura as a saint so uncommon to find on earth.

Sri Krishna respectfully deputed Akrura to go to Hastinapura and find out information about the welfare of the Pandavas under the care of Dhrutarashtra.

In due time Akrura returned to Mathura and acquainted Sri Krishna with the illtreatment meted to the Pandavas by the old uncle and the unjust cousins.

Jarasandha Invades Mathura.

Jarasandha, a father-in-law of Kamsa, invaded Mathura with an enormous army. With the help of the divine chariots Balarama and Krishna killed the mighty forces but spared the life of Jarasandha who lived to raise inimical armies against Krishna seventeen times.

Before the eighteenth engagement, Kalayavana along with three crores of troups faced the divine brothers. Sri Krishna ordered the erection of a city inside the sea, and the accomplishment of an oceanic stronghold served the purpose of accomodating the yadus in safety during troubled times in Mathura. Balarama guarded Mathura. Unarmed Krishna faced the Kalayavana who chased him long and finally near about a cave Sri Krishna disappeared into it. In the cave was sleeping a person whom Kalayavana kicked thinking him to be Krishna. He was actually Muchukundu who woke up and with his powerful looks burnt Kalayavana. Krishna stood before the disturbed devotee who woke up after a long sleep ordained by the devatas. The Lord blessed Muchukundu who desired the boon of eternal devotion to Him.

After successfully destroying the Mlechha troops of Kalayavana Krishna returned to Mathura. Jarasandha attacked again with a big following and chased the divine brothers to the summit of a mountain ; but not identifying them subsequently

burnt the mountain sides. Balarama and Krishna jumped out a long distance and made good their escape to Dwaraka.

Revathi, the daughter of Raivata, was given in marriage to Balarama (Sankarshana) under instructions from Brahma.

Sri Krishna weds Rukmani Devi.

Sage Suka narrated the auspicious story of Sri Krishna marrying Rukmini Devi.

King Bhishmaka ruled Vidarbha. He had five sons and one daughter Rukmini who was no other than Goddess Lakshmi on earth. The first son was known as Rukmi and was undesirable.

Young Rukmini was seen like rising moon !
Her palace shone as hallow'd west with light !
She was performing marriages with toys
And was exchanging deals with other girls.
Mock dinners she served grand to her friends young
And spent her time in joy and sport and peace !
In palace she sat in cradles bright
Of gold ; in gardens she grew creepers green !
She played with parrots, swans, and peafowl fair !

The princess grew in form to lure Krishna ;
Her face had glow when Sri Krishna had thoughts
Of her ; her bosom soon enlarged as He
Dreamt her ; her waist looked thin when He lost wit !
His knot of love enhanced her hair on head !

She heard description of Krishna in full
From courtiers and guests in Vidarbha,
And fixed her heart on Him serene and sweet !
She burnt herself with love but shone with hope !

Krishna heard Rukmini's form beautiful,
And character pure, suave, and rare and set
His heart on her for wife determin'd fast !

The evilminded Rukmi objected to the idea of Rukmini being given in marriage to Krishna, and planned to give her to Sisupala. Knowing the vicious plan of her brother, Rukmini took a brahmin into her confidenee and sent him to Dwaraka

requesting him to meet Sri Krishna and give her message and explain to Him her decision to marry Him alone, and also the machination of her elder brother and the infirmity of her aged father.

The brahmin went to Dwaraka and met Krishna who respected the visitor and seated him on His golden throne and nursed him with His own hands. After giving him a royal feast, Krishna said: "O brahmin! you are a contented, and happy soul! Where do you live? Are you happy in your realm? What has brought you hither? What is the news? I am at your service!" The Brahmin blessed Sri Krishna with immediate marriage and gave Him the message of Rukmini and urged immediate action.

The message ran thus:

I bow to Thee, my heart goes now to Thee!
I have no shame in confession thus to Thee!
Is there one maid that will not pray for Thee
As husband knowing Thy hallow'd fame and name!
Lakshmi chose Thee; so will I choose Thee now!
If offerings of mine bear fruit, do come
And take me by Thy hand at once and save!
In two days I will pray at Durga's shrine,
Out of the city strong and then as I walk out
From temple, hold me to Thy heart and take
Me away to Thy Dwaraka: and jackal mean
Of Sisupala shall not touch the bride
That Thou lion valourous shall own!

If I miss Thee for husband now, I will
Own Thee as husband in all births of mine
This frame shall bear in days to come on earth!
O Lord! the ears that hear not Thy words chaste,
The beauty that is not for Thee supreme;
The eyes that do not see Thy hallow'd form;
The tongue that tastes not Thy lips sweet divine;
The nose that smells not floral wreath of Thine;
The life that does not serve Thee Lord divine;
These all exist as waste on earth and die!

The brahmin messenger described the exquisite beauty of the bride and said that she deserved to be His consort. Krishna,

held the brahmin's hands and promised to fulfil the desire of Rukmini and added that His heart was already set on her.

Sri Krishna ordered his famous chariot drawn by four horses to be brought and drove in it with the messenger and reached the city of Kundina where the preparations for the marriage were in rapid progress.

The roads were watered, and houses bore festoons of decoration. The citizens were gay in choice dress.

The king of Vidarbha, yielding to Rukmi, offered prayers in the morning and fed the learned ones and honoured them with suitable presents. The elders blessed the bride.

The king of Chedis prepared himself suitably and came over with his son Sisupala, friends, and an enormous army. The retinue of the Chedis included Salva, Jarasandha, Dantavaktra, Vidurtha, and many others.

This great party was received and respected by the bride's father and lodged suitably.

Balarama hurried to Kundina in haste with enormous infantry, cavalry, and numerous fighter chariots, and was ready to meet any situation Bhishmaka received them too with due honours and put the brothers into a palace outside the city already crowded by that time.

The bride secluded in her palace was anxiously expecting good news from Sri Krishna.

Rukmini young spoke not to mother hers
  Her heart ; smiled not ; slept not ; wiped not her tears ;
  Dressed not her head ; ate not ; drank not ; sang not ;
  Bathed not ; wore not the flowers gay ; looked not
  Into the glass ; played not with swans ; but grew thin, weak !
  She saw in all directions for Krishna !

She thought :

Has messenger mine reached Lord Krishna ?

  Has he not gone ? Has Lord Krishna thought it
  A wrong from me ? Or has He come ? Will God
  Help me ? Will not Iswari help me now ?

Her eye and shoulder and thigh left throbb'd quick,

And soon came in the messenger from Him
And said : " Krishna has come to wed thee, bride ! "

Rukmini prostrated before the good brahmin and thus expressed her gratitude.

The citizens of Vidarbha saw the lotus face of Krishna and prayed that He should hold the hand of Rukmini and not Sisupala of questionable merit.

Rukmini saw that a few hours stood before her meeting her Lord to her heart's content The bride dedicating herself to the lotus feet of Krishna, slowly walked in devout peace and prayerful silence from her palace to the temple of Goddess Durga accompanied by the queens, protected by royal guard, and with all the accompaniments like the trumpeteers, the musicians the dancers, the carriers of plates with the presents and offerings for the deity.

Rukmini washed her hands and feet, and entered the shrine and reached Durga Devi and prayed in mind :

My faith is in Thee Goddess Iswari !
Thy Lord and Thou form ancient couple first !
I pray to you ; and one depending on
You two meet no destruction, death or woe !
May you make Sri Krishna hold my hand sure !

Rukmini offered preparations of rice, clothes, flowers, ornaments and sandal to the Goddess. Later, similarly she offered respects to the many elderly brahmin women and the queens and had their benedictions in return. The princess stepped out of the shrine.

As lightning comes from clouds of rainy sky ;
As deer darts out of moon in bout of play ;
As Mohini escapes from Brahma's blind ;
As Lakshmi comes with light from sea of milk ;
Young Rukmini came out in steps of swan
That swims in lake Manasarovar !

With breasts like globes of gold ; waist thin ; with rings
Of gems on fingers red ; with stones in gold
That shed light bright on her own form ; with curls
Of hair on face as bees seek lotus blades ;

With smiles like rays of moon that showed the teeth
Like pearls out of lips coral red she stepp'd !

Her veil slipped out of place and spear of God
Of Love struck youths of fame that saw her then !
The plates of lustre bright set on waist band
Threw rays of light as to form rainbow neat !
The music set by anklets reach'd the ears
Of princes strong, who were struck by Cupid !

A paragon of beauty she walked out !
Face like full moon with eyes of deer, with curls
Of hair like bees that hum to lotus sweet,
With lips of coral hue and neck of charm,
And feet like buds in growth and bosom like
The head of elephant in heat and strength,
And back with heaves of tempting youth, and with
Steps princely in the gait and with waist thin,
And hands like lotus red and with scent sweet
Rukmini blessed with beauty's wealth came out !

The princes strong and fair saw Rukmini
And were struck deep by arrows of Cupid !
They fainted, got loose in dress and flopped in seats !
Their eyes saw dim and they were lost in craze !

The bride in looks of royal bashfulness
Put her forelocks aside from face and saw
In stealth Krishna her Lord, who feasted on her,
The consort dear to Him in all His sport !
Krishna with lotus face and blue in hue,
And with chest broad, arms long, waist thin, and silk
And jewels on, saw Rukmini with joy !

As rival suitors saw, Krishna took her
Into His chariot and thus Krishna
Won her and drove to Dwaraka with joy !
The lion took his own due from jackals small !
He blew His conch to rend the air with sound !

Balarama and yadus strong went on
With Sri Krishna in glory high and great !

Krishna thus outraged the courage and sagacity of the galaxy of royal and rival suitors, and drove away with Rukmini.

The disappointed princes headed by Jarasandha followed the yadus with a strong army. Krishna and Balarama who found them, destroyed their great following. Thus defeated the princes fled for their lives. Jarasandha consoled Sisupala who was moping like a new widower ; and said : "Luck is with the enemies. We are unfortunate and therefore have had defeat to-day !"

Rukmi chased Krishna with an enormous army and neared him and further hurt him with three sharp arrows. He also spoke wild words :

Krishna ! art Thou our equal to wed one
From our race great ? Where wert thou born ? Where wert
Thou brought up ? Who knows education thine ?
Thou hast no shame ! Thou dost know no respect !
Thou hast thy sport ! Thou doest not face a foe
In shape thine own ! Thou art not king like me !
Give back my sister Rukmini ! If not,
Face fire from my bow raining arrows sharp !

Krishna stopped his chariot and steered it to face the prattling youth and cut to pieces all his weapons. Rukmi darted upon Krishna with sword in hand like a cricket falling into forest fire, and now the Lord caught him and gathered up the sword and was ready to do away with the mean offender. Now Rukmini fell upon the feet of Krishna and out of pity for her brother pleaded to save him :

O Lord ! this brother of mine knows not Thee
As God of gods and ocean of love pure !
He did injustice dark to Thee today !
My parents would weep at his death, though now
Hari is their son-in-law, great, divine !

The Lord saw His consort in confusion, sorrow, and tears and at His own feet and therefore excused her brother, but tied him to his chariot with ill-shaven moustache and head. In the mean time Balarama and the other Yadu heroes returned and saw the sad plight of Rukmi. Balarama advised Krishna to excuse his brother-in-law with life and looking at Rukmini, consoled her and said :

Rukmini good ! thou shalt not feel for him !
In sin he stands drown'd. Earns desert from Him !
The Atma is not body doomed to death !
Thy blindness for this truth makes thee look as
A friend or foe ! Do not think ill of Him !
Rukmi hast now the fruit for his own acts !

Rukmi vowed not to return to Kundini but lived aside and aloof. Therefore he built a new city for himself.

The Wedding.

Dwaraka was decorated, The roads were washed and cleaned. The houses were adorned with plantain trees and festoons. The citizens dressed best and were in delight.

Sri Krishna married Rukmini Devi in royal splendour. Rishis, Brahmins, elders and Kings were present at the sacred marriage and gave the couple many presents with affection. Narada sang in joy.

The God weds Goddesss in the sport as man !
Vishnu and Lakhmi great do rule the world !
They come to earth and meet as man and wife !
In sport like this, sin dies and virtue thrives !
Those in search of the truth do meet the MAN ;
Realise the God in MAN ; but some in dark,
Know not the God ev'n when HE faces them straight !

Pradyumna.

Sri Krishna had a son Pradyumna through Rukmini Devi. He was kidnapped while an infant of less than ten days by Sambara, an asura, noted for his ' maya ' ; and thrown into the ocean. A fish swallowed the baby and the same fish was caught by a fisherman who presented the same to their king Sambara. The fish was opened in the royal kitchen and a baby emerged out of it. Mayavati, Rati Devi in disguise, being in charge of the royal kitchen took charge of the same and reared him after the revelation from Narada that the boy was but her own husband.

The child grew up into a fine youth of charming features and kindled love in any woman that cast her eyes on him.

Mayavati looked at the beautiful form of the youth and approached him as wife.

The youth exclaimed :

Thou hast compunction none of mother dear !
Why hast thou changed to love as wife to me ?
Mayavati replied :

O prince ! Thou art the son Rukmini bore
To Lord Krishna ; and asura stole thee,
And put to seas, and then a fish brought thee
To me, and Thou art Manmatha with form !
Now back to me Thou art my husband sure !

Mayavati taught her husband masterly technique of 'maya' to overcome Sambara and thereby the asura was killed.

The beautiful couple journeyed in the sky and reached Dwaraka and entered the private palace of Sri Krishna. It was here that the prince, Pradyumna, son of Krishna, was first mistaken for Sri Krishna himself and the queens blushed and stepped aside, for a while.

The prince was like Krishna in face and form.
Great Rukmini saw him with other queens,
And felt the urge of mother with breasts wet !

She expressed :

This prince with eyes like lotus blades and face
Like moon full lit, with waist of lion strong ;
Which mother good and father great were bless'd
By this young boy so much like son to me !

Lo ! Babe at breast of mine, a devil stole
From my abode ! Where is that babe ? O God !
That one should be so good as he, and fair !
This prince of charm is like my husband great
In smiles, in looks, in voice ! My heart leaps out !
My eyes are wet with tears ! My breasts do swell !
I think this is my son ! If not the queens
With me would laugh at me ! O Lord ! help me !

At this psychological juncture, Krishna, Devaki, and Vasudeva came in with sage Narada sweet in his tunes. The

truth was narrated by the sage to the great satisfaction of the hesitant mother and others.

Pradyumna and Mayavati who were but Manmatha and Rati Devi respectively were received affectionately and they lived thereafter in happiness in Dwaraka.

It is no wonder that Pradyumna kindled the hearts of women even inside the royal palaces of Dwaraka, because he was Manmatha himself.

Syamantaka Jewel.

The Sun God presented his devoted disciple King Satrajit a rare jewel Syamantaka. Krishna asked the same for the king of the Yadus. but Satrajit refused to comply with the request.

One day Prasenajit, brother of Satrajit, wore the jewel, went on horse back to a forest on a hunt and was unfortunately killed by a lion, who carried away the jewel. Jambavanta, King Bear, killed the lion and took the jewel and gave it as a play thing to his child in his cave.

Satrajit suspected Krishna for all the evils befalling, and spread a rumour that He killed his brother for the sake of the jewel.

Sri Krishna unable to bear the wicked rumour went into the forest and traced the fate of the jewel, and saw it in a cave. The nurse of the baby boy of Jambavanta raised alarm and the King Bear came and fought with Krishna for no less than twenty eight days and at last yielded with the sublime realisation that his opponent was no other than Vishnu himself.

Jambavanta understood Krishna's mission to secure Syamantaka jewel and to silence the tongues of envy and evil, and therefore not only gave the jewel to Him, but also his daughter in marriage to Him. The Lord returned to Dwaraka with his new bride and the jewel.

Krishna returned the jewel in open court to King Satrajit who then felt very much ashamed for his guilt. To please Sri Krishna, Satrajit gave Satyabhama, his beautiful daughter, in marriage to Him and also the jewel which was not accepted by Krishna.

On account of this rare jewel Satrajit was killed by Satadhanva who was in turn killed by Krishna. The jewel at last rested with Akrura.

Sri Krishna also married Kalindi, Mitravinda, Satya, Bhadra, and Lakshana.

The end of Naraka.

Naraka, the son of Earth, secreted in his capital Pragjyotisha, the ear rings of Aditi, mother of Indra ; Indra's mountain of jewels ; and the umbrella of Varuna. Indra prayed to Sri Krishna to set the matters right.

The Lord was preparing to go to war with Naraka when His consort Satyabhama requested to follow Him and said :

My Lord ! may I see Thy war glorious !
May I speak hallow'd fame of Thine to queens
That do not go with Thee ! Permit me, please,
To follow Thee to battle field this time !
Sri Krishna replied :

It is not music sweet of bees at buds
And flowers fragrant for thy sight, queen bold !
It is to be a rain of arrows sharp
On field of war with trenches and foes of might,
And not the lakes for swans to swim in joy !
There will be rows of weapons destructive,
And not the lines of flowers of hues new !
Should queen dear of mine see scenes of war ?
Stay back at palace royal with peace safe.

Krishna took Styabhama who remained adamant with her request, and both rode Garuda and reached the impregnable Pragjyotisha where the fortifications were made impregnable by Mura. The Lord destroyed all of them with ease. Mura and also his seven sons were killed.

At last Naraka had to face Sri Krishna. He decorated himself with the jewels and ear rings of Aditi and stood with a large army ready for a fight. Sri Krishna and Satyabhama were seated on Garuda like a cloud adorned with lightning.

Satyabhama took the bow and arrows and stood to support her Lord.

The queen twang'd bow string sending arrows sharp
On armies of enemy as her bangles fair
Resound'd and her face shone with light of gems
Of ornaments like armour of gold bright!
The heroine with smiles at her Krishna
Stood firm with left leg to fore and fought
With prowess military to stun her Lord!

The soldiers of Naraka had to hide behind him and seeing this Sri Krishna said:

The maid that shuns the marriages of toys,
Has come to field of war that frightens men!
The wife that hid from men at palace lone
Has come to win the foes in fight on fields!
The queen that avoids the cradles soft
Has ridden Garuda like heroine bold!
The queen that hates the noise of friends at home
Has heard the din and cry and death of war!
My consort that trains pea fowl dancing gay
Has now seen woes of dying soldiers weird!
The queen that knows not to set strings and play
On veena holds the bow as archer train'd!
And one that knows not twining creepers up
The trees has set the bow strings straight and right!
One that knows not to knit the pearls to thread
Has set the arrows right on string of bow!
One that does not know teaching parrots sweet
Has sung the songs of weapons magical!
The queen that speaks but sparse has roared with rage
Like lioness! That is Satyabhama!
Krishna was struck by valour of his queen!

Krishna was faced by Naraka who taunted:

Krishna, Thou hiding behind wife in war!
Come, fight as man! I shall not face Thy wife!

Sri Krishna replied in action:

I will kill thee, Naraka mad! Stop talk!
Krishna sent weapons forceful quenching men
And elephants and horses of enemy wild!
The cyclic weapon of Krishna was hurl'd!

And it cut Naraka's head down and thus
The asura died down with his ear rings
Still shining on the battle field with glow !

The devatas rained flowers from heaven and the sages and saints sang praises of the Lord. Krishna and Satyabhama entered Pragjyotisha and received from Earth, mother of Naraka, the ear rings, the umbrella, the Vijayanthi garland, and a great jewel. Earth praised the Lord and sought His blessings on Bhagadatta the son of Naraka, who was thereafter allowed to succeed his cruel father. The precious things recovered were returned to their respective owners.

Krishna inspected the palace and harem of the diseased Naraka and saw sixteen thousand damsels imprisoned. They all blushed at Him with spontaneous love. He despatched the helpless captives to Dwaraka where He duly married and lived with each one of them in separate palace. The booty earned from Pragjyotisha was great and included wealth, ornaments, and elephants of Airavata breed.

Sri Krishna carried away the Parijata plant at the request of Satyabhama and placed it in his consort's garden, which therefrom attracted the bees from heaven and spread an inviting fragrance for distance, The acquisition of the plant was obstructed by the devatas whose pride was immediately put down.

Sri Krishna and Rukmini.

One night Krishna was seated in comfort on His couch and His consort Rukmini was gently wafting the fan herself.

Apartment private, from whose roof hung pearls
And flowers fragrant and lights shone soft
And whose floor had the blades of floral wealth,
Contained a seat of splendour royal rich ;
And on it sat Krishna with grace divine !
As breeze of Parijata flowed, and cooled
With light of Autumn moon in mellow rays,
Krishna and Rukmini were seen supreme
And in embrace, while she held fan in hand !
A beauty exquisite she shone with looks of love ;
Her wafting hands set songs from bangles rich

With gems ; with garlands brushing her bosom bright
And with a zone on waist that add'd grace soft !

Krishna spoke smiling to Rukmini who
Shared His sport lone ! Lakshmi is thus ev'r with
Vishnu the Lord of universe and gods !
"Why did thou choose us no way like the king
Sisupala, bold, fair, for thy Lord ?
Thou hast displeased thy kith and kin in this !
Our path is not that world likes, knows or votes !
We fight with none for thrones as kings of might
Become our enemies ! We live in sea !
We are poor ones ; the poor do know us well !
The rich shun us ! Our deal is with the poor !
Our movement is not open in the world !
We have demeanour that is strange and not
The one that others practise royal way !
In friendship and love matchings equal pay ;
And knitting varying grades ends in grief !
Ev'n now may thou choose from Sisupala,
Dantavaktra, Jarasandha, Salva—
All mighty men with wealth and pow'r and fame !
We carried thee from kings ! Is it with lust ?
No !. It is vanquishing the pride of kings !
The love for women, children, gold and house
Exists not with us ! We live on as light
With attachment neither to the house
Nor body ! Aim does not exist in work !"

Thus spoke Krishna, and slipp'd Rukmini out
Of His embrace as she was fill'd with grief !
Face whitening in grief cold ; tears welling from
The eyes with tinge of collyrium to breasts
Warmed with salve saffron ; kneading floor with nails
Of foot with rosy hue, spoke not the queen !
Her heart was hurt by words of hate extreme ;
The fan slipp'd off the hand, the bracelets dropp'd,
The hair on head came to disorder as
The storm disturbs the leaves of plantain trees !

Krishna now rose in haste and held His queen
To His embrace and set her hair locks aright ;

Wiped tears from eyes and cheeks and set
The chain of pearls and bracelets loose, to shape;
Fanned gentle head and face and then suport'd
The breasts in order and hugg'd tight to His
Own self His queen, thus faint with mind much hurt!
Krishna thus led Rukmini to the bed
Of flowers mov'd by breeze in gentle wafts!

Rukmini Devi slowly recovered and said:

" My Lord! I am not equal to Thee great!
Thou hast no fear of foes and thus Thy life
Is in the sea, the depth of heart, pure, safe!
Thou needst no seat of kings as thou art King
Of Kings with throne that perishes not at all!
The path of Thy devotees is not laid out!
Thy path is more secret, superb, supreme!
Thou hast no gold! Thou art all wealth in truth!
All offerings at Thy lotus feet are made
By those who offer themselves to Thee!
Thou art the Paramatma pure and high!
And hence I chose Thy grace! I know Thee, Lord!
The race of time is from Thy winks of eyes!
Thou carried me as Thine own, lion like!
Hast Thou fear from kings mortal, bestial, proud?
The kings and saints that sought Thy lotus feet
Nev'r came to grief! Why will I come to woe dark?
Thou art the shrine of Goddess Lakshmi great!
I shall wait at thy feet for bliss and peace!
Any woman not aware of Thee seeks man
For love and thus seeks body doom'd to death!
I have Thee human and superhuman!

Sri Krishna smiled now and said to Rukmini:

I spoke to Thee to know thy mind again,
Though it is known to ME since birth of thine!
No ill is meant when I speak out in hunt
Or sport or close with dear and near, sweet heart!
Be not so hurt as to stab it deep down!
Devotion thine strong, steadfast, kind, to me,
Does yield to Thee bliss, eternal, great!
Some women desire to live with ME

And quench ambition of their flesh and lust,
And they are victims of 'maya' from ME!
I know that Thou art mine and with me ev'r!
Thou wife to me hast ev'r freed me of lust
Enticing man to woman, children, house
And other endless scenes, mirages and sins!
Is there a woman like thee, Rukmini?
Thou chose me husband having heard of Me,
But not seen ME so far and sent a man
With message to seize thee while coming out
Of shrine of Ambika, else Thou would end
Thy life in search of ME! Thus thou loved ME!
Thou kept silent at disfigurement
Of Rukmi who is brother to thee dear!
Thou art wife ideal, chaste, and thou art bless'd!
And nonpareil in world for thy kind suave!
I am with thee as husband bearing thee,
Like one at home in human daily round!"

At this Rukmini looked smiling at her Lord and knelt down at His lotus feet in utter submission and deep meditation.

Sage Suka at this juncture told King Parikshit that this strange action of Krishna was meant to cure Rukmini of her pride born of being placed the prime queen of her Lord.

Sri Krishna had ten sons through each queen. Pradyumna was a son though Rukmini; and he married Rukmavati, the daughter of Rukmi; and to this couple was born Aniruddha. Rukmi gave his daughter to Pradyumna, to please his sister though continuing ill will against Sri Krishna. He further gave also his grand daughter Rochana in marriage to Aniruddha. Rukmi ultimately met his death in the hands of Balarama.

Bana, son of Bali.

Bana was one of the hundred sons of King Bali, ruling at Sonita with all prosperity. He was singularly devoted to Siva and pleased Him with high proficiency in music and dance. Bana was mighty and proud with one thousand arms. Having seen Lord Siva in front of him, the asura expressed his urge for war and added the he found no equal to fight with except Siva Himself. Siva angrily spoke: "When your flag falls, you

shall have one like me to fight with and all your mighty arms will then become amputated with but four to help you."

Bana had a beautiful daughter Usha. She dreamt one night that she was in the embrace of a lover who alone deserved her hand; and got up from sleep, disturbed in mind, and uttered: "Where are you, my dear?". This prattling drew the notice of the royal attendants who slept in the same apartment and thereafter the princess felt shy and dejected.

The princess lost interest gradually in her usual daily avocations and grew thinner and visibly weaker. At this Chitralekha, the minister's daughter and trusted friend of the princess was entrusted to investigate and act promptly. The confidant had a guarded reply that the lover of the young princess was exceedingly good-looking and won her heart and that she would marry him alone, though she had never seen him at all previously. The identification of the fiance was difficult but was made by the drawings of the youths amongst gods, lesser gods, and human beings being presented before the love-stricken. After long and laborious screening, the picture of Aniruddha, son of Pradyumna, and grandson of Sri Krishna was passed as that of the lover seen in the dream. Chitralekha thereafter procured the boy, while he was sleeping, from Dwaraka by her magical prowess journeying all the while in air unheard and unseen and untouched.

The prince was placed in the private apartment of the princess. They lived in happiness as man and wife. Time went on. The princess was in the family way and this change in her was noticed by visitors and reported to King Bana who became enraged at the infamous conduct of his dear daughter and the incidental damage to the family prestige. Bana paid a surprise visit to his daughter and to his great indignation and wild consternation found the lovely son of Pradyumna playing with Usha at dice.

A prince was seen with face lit by ear rings
That poured fourth rays of light of radiance,
And lotus eyes, and hair in curls on head,
And of arms long and fair, and clad in silks!
Thus he was beautiful and exquisite
In looks and smiles and joy before Usha.

The prince was playing dice with his Usha
And wore a garland of jasmins that had
The saffrom stain from breasts of playmate Usha!

The valiant son of Pradyumna bold and young
Held iron bolt in hand and chased the men
That came in to fall on him rude to siege?
Bana saw this sore; tied Aniruddha
In ties of serpents strong and bound him!

Usha became dejected and sorrowed over the turn of nts. The flag of Bana fell to the ground and the asura ιembered the grave warning of Lord Siva.

At Dwaraka the disappearance of Aniruddha caused con-n. Narada came and informed Krishna about the plight of iruddha in Sonitapura.

Balarama and Krishna and many other Yadu heroes started h enormous armies and invaded the city of Sonitapura which ıa ruled in glory.

Bana prepared enormously and met Krishna. Lord Siva ne with his sons and supported Bana. As the lesser gods l angels witnessed in anxiety from heavens, the battle bet-en the hostile sides raged and raged. Siva was rendered natose by Krishna who then annihilated the enemy forces. larama fought simulataneously to end the hostile surges of diers. Bana had to face Krishna personally, and was saved m being killed by Kotara, the mother of Bana who stood ced in front shielding her son. Krishna turned His face ay avoiding the nude figure facing Him and at this moment na escaped into his city.

There started three hundred and three footed Siva fever ich aimed at Krishna, who thereafter counteracted it by His n four hundred and four footed Vishnu fever.

Bana returned well protected and fortified to fight against ishna a second time. He was shaken miserably, and defeated d his arms were cut down mercilessly by His Wheel. Now va intervened on behalf of His devotee Bana and implored i Krishna, the supreme being, to spare the asura's life.

Sri Krishna spoke:

O Siva great! I shall spare asura

Bana, descendant of Prahlada great !
I will protect his race and keep word !
Bana shall have four arms of strength and stand
Devot'd to Thee free from deterioration !

At this Bana bowed down before the Lord and very soon presented Him with his daughter Usha and her lover Aniruddha. The new couple reached Dwaraka with Sri Krishna and lived happily.

The story of King Nriga.

The sons of Krishna went to a forest on a hunt. They found a huge chameleon in a well which was dry. They tried to rescue it but did not succeed. Sri Krishna , informed of this, came to the well and with his left hand lifted the lizard-lik creature with ease and the touch of the Lord restored it to the original form of a celestial. The released one bowed down to the Lord and on His enquiry narrated his story. He said : " I am Nriga, son of Ikshvaku, known for my charitable nature and generosity as Thou knowest already.

Once a cow that I gave a brahmin mixed up with the herd of cows that I subsequently distributed as gifts to others. The one thus given away went into the custody of another brahmin. The past owner demanded her and she would not be yielded over by the present owner even though I was prepared to give many more cows instead.

Days rolled on. My end came. I faced Yama who desired to know my decision about my desert for the sin of giving a cow twice over though unconsciously. I replied that the punishment for it be first applied to me and later the fruit of the good deeds done may be tasted by me. Yama agreed. Down I fell like this. Thou, now, hast saved me in mercy ! " Nriga then ascended to heaven.

The story was stressed by the Lord and his sons were taught not to go near the brahmins pure and godly, even if they chose to provocate the royal order. The property of a brahmin is such as not to be touched with or without knowledge.

Balarama goes to Brindavana.

Balarama went to Gokula to see his parents, friends and others. On reaching Vraja he bowed to his parents who emb-

raced him with tearful eyes and enquired of the welfare of himself and that of Sri Krishna and others at Mathura with affection. He bowed to the parents and elders and embraced old friends with warmth and enquired about all of them.

The women of Vraja well dressed and pacing brisk went to Balarama and enquired of Krishna.

Rama! will brother dear Krishna go here?
Does He think of us in Vraja? Or has
He soon forgotton us while with the maids
Of Mathura? He has left us and his
Old parents dreaming of Him and friends close!

On sands of Yamuna what has He spoken?
On ways of Brindavan how has He touched
Our chins and held out promises to fulfil?
How has He drawn us near and praised us all?
He has forgotten all those words with ease!
How has the damsels of Mathura new
Laid trust in His words false, but sweet to ears!
Thus women of Vraja longed for Krishna!

Balarama consoled the helpless souls and carried the advice of his brother to them and cured their distressed hearts. He lived in Brindavan with them for two months.

On sandy banks of Yamuna lit by
The silver rays of Moon in splendour full,
And in the groves of mango, lime, and date
Between the creepers of cardamom, low,
Balarama drew women of Vraja!

Varuni drink from Varuna flowed full
In hollows of trees and filled the air
Of forest, and Rama and maids drank it
And felt intoxicated and roamed in woods,
Like elephant with his queens in lust!
The damsels sang, and he sang gay for long!
Balarama command'd the Yamuna
To go to Him for bath, but she kept quiet,
As He looked drunk to depths and mad in thoughts!

Balarama thundered in anger at the river and said: "I will now tear you with my plough, O Yamuna!"

The Yamuna came up at once as a beautiful woman and submitted: "O Rama of fame and strength! spare me! I am at Thy service! Pardon me!" Balarama forgave her and also accepted some precious gifts from her. The whole party had an enjoyable bath in the crystal waters of the holy river. Balarama came to the banks dressed in azure silks and wore the ornaments and garland that came as presents and looked mighty like Airavata.

Sri Krishna killed the pretender Paundraka and also Sudakshina. Balarama killed Dwivida (monkey).

Samba Marries Lakshmana.

Samba carried away Lakshmana the beautiful daughter of Duryodhana at the swayamvara, as did Lord Krishna His Rukmini Devi. The Kuru leaders chased young Samba, overcame the young warrior, and fettered him and took him to Hastinapura. Narada gave this information to the Yadus and Ugrasena decided to fight out the issue. Balarama set out to Hastinapura with Uddhava on a peace mission; and halted in a garden outside the city. Balarama spoke to the Kurus who came to receive him:

The boy did fight lion-like with Kurus old
Who went round him, like jackals mean and base!
Is it all fair that you should fight that way?
Our King demands release of our Samba!

To this the Kurus replied haughtily:

What wonder great! Yadus own their wealth, land,
And all prosperity to Kurus! You look
Like serpents fed with milk, and harm Kurus
The donors lenient! surrender now!
You shall not have our daughter to your son!
Your status is low; we do stand ov'r high!

At this Balarama grew angry and lifted his plough end and shook Hastinapura to drown it into Ganga. The citizens of the place trembled in fear at the quake of the city and assembled with the bride and bridegroom in their front before Rama and prayed for pardon. It was granted.

Duryodhana meekly and politely submitted his daughter and son-in-law as also enormous dowry to Balarama. The great Rama and the new couple went to Dwaraka which received them with eclat.

Narada sees the Divine Sport of Hari.

Sage Narada understood that Krishna married sixteen thousand damsels that were released from the prison of Naraka, and lived with each one of them in separate places at the same time.

The sage divine flew to Dwaraka keen
To see the sport of Lord Hari supreme!
The city large was full of gardens gay
And mansions palatial, and squares, roads, parks, shrines,
Ponds, tanks, and water sprays, festoons and flags!
The swans were swimming in the lakes in peace!
The lotuses were full in waters clear!
The bees were swarming thick in clusters brisk!
Each palace was of marble, emerald,
And silver pure and bore equipment with
The gems and gold that shone with lustre bright!
The gods were in the shrines and worshiop'd keen!
The palace of Krishna was kingly high
And beautiful in architecture grand!
The queens sixteen thousand had palaces each
With grandeur and lived each with Lord Krishna!

Narada enter'd palace of one queen,
It stood on coral shafts with roof of gems,
And stones of blue and green, in hue, on walls.
The curls of pearly chains hung from the roof,
The chains were of white-ivory and cots
Of gold and stones of precious order stood!
Each hall had men and women to attend,
In dress of wealth and with faces smiling sweet!
The gems and stones of hue in ornaments
Shed light and put out darkness dim in paths!
The smoke from incense burnt in palaces huge.
Emerg'd and made the peafowl dance with pride!

Narada saw in one seat golden, Lord
Krishna, with queen who fann'd with chamara,
And smiled at Him in stealth and satisfaction!
Krishna saw Narada and bowed with head
Low touching sage's feet and washed them and sprinkl'd
The water ov'r His head and offer'd seat
His one and said: "I stand to serve Thee, sir."
The sage adoring Him: Thou art Vishnu
That takes forms suiting time and place to mend
The wicked and save righteous! May I see
Thy feet for ev'r, remember them for ev'r!"

Narada went to palace of one more
Queen royal where he saw Krishna at dice
With her and Uddhava! He said: "O sage
Thou art ev'r welcome here; pray, do command!"
In wonder great the sage went to third place
And there he saw the Lord with sons in care
And kissing kind and like a father good!

The sage pass'd through the palaces consorts held,
And in each found Krishna with one queen dear!
The Lord was active like a man with wife
In house with daily round of duties true!
Krishna was seen in prayer or feeding some,
Or giving cows and calves to Brahmins good,
Or wielding sword and shield, or riding steed,
Or going out in chariot with men,
Or in bed soft, or with the poets great
That sang His praise or holding court seat'd high
With courtiers that stood grand or with a queen
In roars of laughter at a joke or catch
Or hearing passages from the vedas great,
Or following 'Dharma', 'Artha' and 'Kama!'
At one place Lord Krishna did sit to think
Of the supreme and it was His own SELF!

The Lord thought out with His Balarama
To fight or win out peace or save the good
Or mend the sinful points or to perform
A wedding or send brides to their own homes
With gifts or welcome children that return!

The Lord would walk in guise in court or street
Or harem or places of strategy and value !

The sage, with veneration deep exclaimed :

" Lord Sri Krishna ! Thy sport as human soul
Is perfect, true ! minds Yogic too may miss
Thy sport ! Give me leave Lord to go and sing
Thy name and sport and fame as Godly man ! "
The Lord remind'd the sage that His sport was
To teach and practise Dharma, perfect, pure !

Krishna, The King.

Krishna wakes up at ' Brahma ' hour at morn !
The birds do sing, the bees do hum, the breeze
Does waft from goves ! On bed the Lord twines round
His hands around the neck of queen that holds
Them fast les morn should break the hold of taste !
But He gets up in time and sets His mind
On Atma which supreme with light shines bright
Above, eternal, firm, and as Brahman !
He bathes, puts on dress clean, and prays ' sandhya ',
And honours brahmins good with gifts of gold,
Of cows and calves, and bows to cows and gods.
With silks and ornaments and sandal paste
And with the flowers in wreaths grand around
He looks to welfare of the cows, brahmins
And others needing help ! He feeds the guests
And then eats things with joy and gets for ride !
By now the chariot of gold is got !
He takes to car with looks at queens that blush
And takes Satyaki and Uddhava old,
And reaches His Court Sudharma grand and mounts
His throne of gold and gems, like moon with stars !
The courtiers hail ; the brahmins chant ; maids dance ;
And it is sight of hallow'd glory grand !

One day a brahmin messenger hailing from the numerous kings imprisoned by King Jarasandha was ushered into the royal presence. He described the plight of the kings in chains in Magadha, who desired to take shelter at the feet of Sri Krishna.

Narada comes to the Court of Krishna.

Narada walked in with songs of lilting melody about the sport of Sri Krishna. He informed Krishna that Dharmaraja desired to honour Sri Krishna and do 'Rajasuya' sacrifice, and sought the Lord's approval. Sri Krishna sought the advice of Uddhava who assented to the royal proposal and also said that the time was propitious for the destruction of the evil doers like Jarasandha. Further he added that the time was also ripe for the universal radiation of divinity of Sri Krishna.

Uddhava suggested that Bhima should face singly Jarasandha and kill him in the presence of Krishna.

Krishna at Indraprastha.

Sri Krishna reached Indraprastha with his queens and children and followed by the full complement of the army.

Dharmaraja and his galaxy of brothers met the Lord on His arrival and embraced Him in affection and felt highly elated. Krishna returned their joy with suitable salutations.

Krishna went into the residence of the Pandavas and met Kunti Devi who welcomed Him. Draupadi and Subhadra received the royal queens of the Lord. The guests were comfortably lodged as also the followers.

Maya built for the Pandavas a suitable Hall for the ensuing sacrifice.

One day in the court hall Dharmaraja said to Krishna: "O Govinda! I am doing Rajasuya as worship to Thee in Thy various forms. One reaches Thee by constant contemplation of Thy lotus feet!" Krishna replied: "It is good resolve, O King! Do it. I am on your side, as you are a master of your senses. I am the divine element on your side."

Yudhistira was pleased at the exhortation of the Lord. His brothers conquered all the kings but Jarsandha who stood untouched At this Krishna, Arjuna, and Bhima went to the court of Jarasandha at Girivraja in the guise of Brahmins and said:

O King of fame! who are guests, brahmins like!

Would thou give us what we ask now of thee?
Thou art host royal knowing life is short,
And body is but flesh that goes to dust!

Jarasanadha saw the three men who were really kshatriyas by birth and who had gone to him with a motive as Vamana did to King Bali and said:

Pray, please let me have your needs said at once!
My head if you so want, would be placed down!

At this Sri Krishna said:

O King! I am Krishna, and this Arjuna!
Bhima the strong is here! We wish you fight
With one of us! That is our need of hour!

Jarasandha said:

Krishna! why do you talk so much to me?
Thou hast fled when I did invade Mathura!
Thou hiding in waters out of fear,
Now hast come to war with thy men of fame!
Bhima suits stature mine! I will fight now!

Bhima and Jarasandha fought long and indecisively. At last Sri Krishna realising the details of the birth of the asura in halves and being cemented together into existence by Jara hinted the secret to Bhima by splitting a twig into halves. At this Bhima pulled down the strong enemy and pressing down his foot on one of the foe, tore out the other foot asunder. Thus the asura was split dead. Sahadeva the son of the dead asura was later placed on the throne. The imprisoned princes were released; and they sang the praises of Krishna.

The victorious Pandava brothers and Sri Krishna returned to Indraprastha. They were received by Yudhistira and others with great joy and immense satisfaction.

The end of Sisupala.

The Rajasuya sacrifice was to be performed by Yudhistira. Having taken the permission of Sri Krishna, the Pandava King invited eminent sages like Krishnadwaipayana, Bharadwaja, Vasishta etc., to conduct the sacrifice. Drona, Bhishma, Kripa, Dhritarashtra with his sons, and Vidura were invited. Brah-

mins, Kshatriyas, and others were all assembled to witness the august occasion.

The brahmins broke the soil with plough of gold,
Initiated the King as author there !
To witness Rajasuya sacrifice
The gods and angels high, kings, queens, and saints
Assembled eager in the hall with joy !
The King paid homage high to priests and guests,
And was with galaxy like Indra great,
Rudra, Brahma, and other gods as guests !
The worship prime has to go to one soul ;
Who should have it this august day and hour ?

The wise Sahadeva addressed the assembly thus :

To Lord Krishna the worship prime shall go.
He is the time, the space, the teacher true,
The God, the universe, the fire, the great
Recipient of sacrifices and He
Creates, protects, destroys the cosmic web !
By honouring Krishna one honours SELF
And others too ! O friends ! May He have it !

The voice of the assembly was almost unanimous about the proposal of Sahadeva; and Dharmaraja got up in high spirits to offer the first worship to Sri Krishna.

The King rose smiling and with tears of joy,
And washed His lotus feet with water well,
And sprinkled it on his head and on heads
Of mother dear and brothers and wives chaste !
Silks yellow, ornaments of gold were given !
A rain of flowers rare poured on Krishna,
And greetings of joy great rent all the air.

Sisupala the wicked prince rose up and said
Aggrieved, jealous, mean : " The ruling of
A lad in hall this day has had the sway !
Many souls assemble to see Rajasuya !
Men learned, rishis, and kings of wealth and fame
Are here for honour prime ! How then O King !
Thou hast set honour on the cowherd boy,
Like giving sacred food to jackal mean !

‹rishna has none of family, parents great,
)r race of order high ! He has no God
)r teacher true ! His kind was cursed by one
Yayati ! He drinks wine ! He puts on shapes !
His relationship is strange ! He is a man
This day for us ! He hides in water safe !
Such one deserves first honour now this day ! "

Krishna heard the prattling of Sisupala and remained ike a lion in the midst of smaller animals. Many mem- the gathering closed their ears at the evil oration and ven left the hall to avoid hearing the heinous words of a.

e Pandava brothers and their followers were ready to upon the evil-minded speaker who drew his sword and it. Now Krishna cut the head of Sisupala off with His ıd a light emanating from the asura entered the Lord he contemplated day in and day out as an enemy.

ıarmaraja concluded the sacrifice by honouring the ; members of the learned class and of the royal order raced the function. Many presents were given to the ; according to individual desert. The kings were given a end off in the end.

harmaraja performed the bathing ceremony in the Ganga ,cribed in the holy books.

i Krishna took leave of Dharmaraja, and departed with eens, children, ministers and returned to Dwaraka.

uryodhana, sore at Rajasuya
Of Dharmaraja, just, and jealous of
The pomp and splendour of Pandavas good,
And longing Draupadi the queen of theirs,
And burning hot at heart, walked into Hall
Of sacrifice with sword and brothers strong !
harmaraja was on throne Like Indra !
Duryodhana walked slow on floor that looked
Like water deep ! He fell into water
That looked like floor, and felt enrag'd at it !
he queen of Pandavas and Bhima strong
Went into peals of laughter at that plight !

That was due to magic hall Maya
Had made to please the Pandavas of fame!
The prince, head bent in shame, went out with pain
At heart, and hurt Yudhistira by it!

Krishna saw laughter of Bhima and queens
And knew Duryodhana and his heart sore,
But that was meant for action due in time!

The fall of Salva·

Salva, a stern votary of Siva, propitiated the God and obtained from Him as a boon, a magic chariot of iron that had miraculous powers of movement. He attacked Dwaraka from within his chariot and helped by a large army when Krishna remained still at Hastinapura. Pradyumna with the Yadavas fought hard from Dwaraka. The war raged for seven days and seven nights.

Krishna and Rama returned, and while Rama was in charge of the city, Krishna faced Salva right earnest and destroyed his famous chariot with the club and severed his head with His cyclic weapon " Chakra." Thus ended another wicked soul.

The end of Dantavaktra and Viduratha.

Dantavaktra prattled nonsense and came to fight with the Lord. Krishna beat him to death with His club and a light emanating from the dying one entered Him.

Viduratha, brother of Dantavaktra, came in grief and rage to fight with Krishna who immediately killed him with the disc once again.

At this the gods and angels rained flowers on the Lord from above and the siddhas and gandharvas sang praises of the supreme Lord.

Sri Krishna returned with His Queens and children and the royal retinue to Dwaraka.

Balarama goes on Pilgrimage.

Balarama kept neutral between the Pandavas and Kauravas, and went out on a pilgrimage. Reaching Prabhasa he had a bath and observed righteous practices there.

After visiting many other places Rama reached Naimisha forest where the sages were engaged in a big sacrifice. All the sages except Romaharshana (suta) welcomed the rare guest, and at this Balarama got enraged and ended the life of the presumptuous suta with the end of a kusa grass. At this, the learned assembly felt distressed because a brahmin was murdered and Balarama was advised to make amends for the heinous crime.

The great Yadu proclaimed that the son of Romaharshana will succeed his father and will hold the seat of Brahma as per learned decision. He further followed the prescription of one year's pilgrimage throughout the country to expatiate for his sin as dictated by the sages.

Balarama killed Balvala who disturbed the penances of the great rishis on full-moon and new-moon days.

Balarama tried to pacify Bhima and Duryodhana in combat and further attempted without success for an amicable settlement, and finally reached Dwaraka.

Kuchela.

Sage Suka narrated the ennobling story of Kuchela to King Parikshit.

There was a brahmin Kuchela, detach'd
And virtuous with his wife, who lived in peace!
Though poor, as they knew what befell by chance
To be their due in life! His mind knew God,
And his wife chaste was one with him to help!
The wife and children dear grew thin of want
Of food and drink and it was sight sad and sore!
The wife went up and spoke; " My Lord! be pleased
To think a way to get ov'r penury
Surrounding us! Krishna was thy school mate!
The Lord of Lakshmi great is thy friend dear!
Do go to Him to mend our poverty
And He will bless thee, me, and all that pray
In truth to Him who rescues devotees true!"
Kuchela poor, thought: "I will go and meet
The Lord of Universe and it is good
For life now and hereafter!" And he set out
And asked his wife for gift to friend Krishna.

The housewife went and got one handful small
Of rice beaten flat and packed up in a rag
Of her dear one, and Kuchela went out
With thoughts on Him whose sight would end all sin !
He walked and walked to gates of palace grand
Of Lord at Dwaraka and got into
Apartment decked with seats of gold and gems
And on one seat of shining lustre sat
Krishna while the queen fann'd the Lord in smiles !

The Lord divine saw Kuchela and swooped,
Embraced and took the friend to seat of His
And washed his feet and sprinkl'd wash on head,
And smeared the friend with sandal, saffron, warm,
And offer'd fruit and flowers fresh in love,
And Rukmini with her own hands fann'd him,
And saw the skin and bone in form of man !

The royal queens were stunned to see a man
In honour by their Lord supreme and thus
They gauged now His affection and esteem
To devotee in plight of beggar low !

Krishna said : " Friend ! thou art with wife
And children young ! I know thy mind is weaned
From house and wife and young ones close, and is
Not on the wealth and pomp of life on earth,
But dwells like MY example on one SELF !

Our teacher taught us two the path in life
And to cross ocean of ' samsara ' deep !
I learnt the path and I as Lord supreme
Do practise precepts true for good of world !
Thus do we serve the teacher true and well !

O friend ! dost thou remember journey ours
Into woods for wood, and then it rained in floods,
And we were lost ! Our teacher dear came out
In search of us, and found us both and spoke
In terms appreciative for minding not
The trial but at quest of preceptor !

My love is with thee, Kuchela, the great ;
The greatness is in thy surrender to

This, thine own friend, the SELF where each self ends!
Thou art bless'd high and thy wants shall die soon!
May thou be true to vedas in all lives!"

Krishna enquired: "Friend dear, what gift hast thou
For me? A trifle from a devotee like
Thyself is greater than a mount of gold
From one not having dedication true!
A flower, fruit, or leaf, or water giv'n ov'r
With all devotion pure is welcome to
This SELF!" Kuchela good, looked down in shame,
At his gift poor of rice fried and flat!
The Lord knew mind of friend who came to Him
For bliss and not for wealth though his wife chaste
Induc'd the husband pious to seek for wealth
From HIM and open'd knot of rice from rag
Of cloth on him and ate one handful soon!
One handful more He want'd to eat! Lakshmi
Prevent'd the Lord from it! The guest thus got
From Him the pomp and splendour of Indra!

Kuchela slept deep on cot of kings
In palace of Krishna in Dwaraka
And woke next morn and had the greeting kind
From Him and send off royal! Thus the guest
With bliss of seeing Lord supreme went home!

Kuchela thought: "Poor friend, I am to Him!
Embracing me He took me up His throne
And wash'd my feet and His Lakshmi fann'd me,
And hands divine caressing bosom soft
Of His queen high came down to smear on me
The sandal paste with love as to a coz!.
The King of Kings and God of Gods did nurse
Me, poor old friend at school of Sandipini!
How good of Sri Krishna He gave not gold
To me, lest I should lose my sight of Him!"

Thus Kuchela thought and reached his home with joy!
He saw a palace with storeys high and bright,
And gardens round it with ponds rich with swans,
And lotuses; and with birds that chirp'd from nests

And bees that humm'd in music from hives thick ;
And servants clad with dress of order rich !
A gathering approached him with the songs
And music of the pipes and welcomed him !
It was home, his ; and they attendants, his.
His wife came to receive her lord with tears
Of joy in eyes and closed her eyes in front
Of him and mentally embraced her lord !
Celestial like Lakshmi she looked and led
Her husband home with streams of maids at her !
The home had hundred pillars with gems bright ;
The seats were made of gold, and beds so soft
As foam of milk and white as ivory
And canopies with chains pearly and lit bright ;
And walls were set with emeralds of hue
Green dazzling glow from jewels of the maids !
Kuchela thought at heart : " Krishna drew me
To bosom dear and ate rice beaten flat
That I tied up, as dish of taste for kings !
The wealth He gave, who knows my want and mind ! "
Kuchela lived with wife and children and
Had thought, word, deed on Him and reached the Lord
At end of his existence mundane !

Sri Krishna goes out for bathing on the day of Solar Eclipse.

Peopled from various parts of the land, princes and peasants, moved to Syamanta Panchaka for the day of solar eclipse. Krishna with His sixteen thousand queens, children and grandchildren and royal retinue reached the banks of the holy waters.

The pious people that assembled, bathed on the day of eclipse and observed fast. After breaking the fast and with Krishna's permission the Vrishnis fed the many assembled and also gave gifts to the deserving of them. Later, each one also met his or her friends and kith and kin under the cool shade of the trees.

The yadavas congregated in joy.

Kunti Devi with tears in her eyes met Sri Krishna and exclaimed :

O brother dear and great! Thy kinsmen bore
The hardships sore in woods, and Thou knew it!
Against us is hand of fate and then,
Will kith and kin or friends remember us?

Sri Krishna consoled and replied to her:

O mother! I am not at fault! We are
To play our parts like toys with strings divine
From God and His decrees bear no appeal!
Kamsa kept us disturb'd and now we meet
This day through God's grace kind and in all peace!

Sri Krishna and Rama were in resplendent glory and regal splendour, and were seen by the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and many other kings including Ugrasena.

Nanda and the Gopas and Gopi women also came to see Krishna with sumptuous supplies from Gokula.

Vasudeva embraced Nanda with tears in eyes; the father thus met the foster-father of the Lord. Balarama and Krishna bowed to the parents and embraced them in deep joy. Rohini and Devaki embraced Yasoda and spoke:

O sister dear! can we forget thy love
To boys entrusted to thy hands glorious!
Thou knew not parents of these ones. but thou
Hast reared the children young and dear and as
The lids guard eyes in one! Thou art thus bless'd

Yasoda seated the sons on her lap and embraced them warmly and forgot everything else around.

The Gopi women feasted with their eyes on Krishna, the dearest one to all, and embraced Him at heart with austere devotion. This is certainly an accomplishment rarely possible even with yogis.

Krishna met Gopi women dear and true,
In seclusion and embraced each one with warmth,
And smiled and said: "Devotees! do not think ill
Of ME; My heart was with those suffering from
The tyranny of asura Kamsa!
I left you all as God wish'd it! The Lord

Brings things on earth together, or
Ev'n separates one from the other wide!
Your hearts reside in ME and you have reached
ME sure thus through devotion stern, austere!
I am the God from whom takes cosmos birth!"

Dharmaraja and many others realised that Krishna was but the human form of the supreme Lord.

Lakshana narrates to Draupadi about her marriage to Sri Krishna.

O queen! may thou hear my love story short!
My father dear knew heart of mine set on
The Lord Krishna, whose songs are sung sublime
By Narada! My father set a fish
High up in sky and visible but in water
By its reflection down! One shooting it
With bow and arrow sharp shall win my hand!
That was the rule, and princes came, tried and failed!
Karna, Bhima, and Duryodhana failed!
Arjuna, champion archer did aim true but missed
The fish, and left my father's palace cool!
As kings looked pale with failures, Lord Krishna
In smiles, took bow and arrow, aimed, and shot
The fish out of its hold and thus set joy
At heart of mine, and then the angels sang,
And sprinkled flowers from the ether clear!

I entered the assembly deck'd in dress
Of silks and with steps soft and jingles chime
Of anklets and a garland jewelled rich,
In hand and braid with flowers fine and face
In smiles that were hid by forelocks of hair!
I saw great Lord Krishna and placed garland
On shoulders of Hari that wears Lakshmi!
Then flowed the music and the dance from those
That joyed in hall of swayamvara mine!

Some princes in spite chased Him and met defeat!
Krishna took me to bosom His, in car,
And reached Dwaraka safe, as Sun goes home!
My father Brihatsena bold gave ov'r
His daughter with the presents royal, rich,

And maids to wait on me in numbers large,
And thus esteem'd my choice and earned the praise
Of men and Gods and angels heavenly high !
Krishna though God, as man weds brides on earth
To fulfil actions deep, sublime, divine !

Sages visit Krishna.

Many great rishis like Narada, Viswamitra and others visited Sri Krishna and were worshipped by Him and Balarama. The Lord expressed :

The waters holy and idols in
The shrines take long to give emancipation !
The saints so great as you do give the bliss
At sight, and now O saints ! sublime, help me !
The worship of elements, sun or moon
Perpetuates diversity but at feet
Of you one sees the unity of all !
The body is not SELF nor wife nor kith
And kin ! The mud in shape is not the God !
A sheet of water is not holy thing
For worship by any one ! One that knows not
This is an ass of order first ! The sage
That sees the SELF in all is holy one !

The sages were confounded by the supreme Lord concealing Himself as an ordinary man and performing His duties like destruction of the sinful souls and protection of the benign ones. They all exclaimed :

O Lord ! the veda is Thy heart with SELF !
Thy honour for the realised ones is great !
Our saluations to Thee as we pray at
Thy lotus feet and feel the end of our
Ambition in existence on this earth !
Thy sport does blind the men from knowing Thee !

The sages spoke thus and were taking leave of the Lord when Vasudeva questioned them as to how 'karma' cures 'karma'. To this Narada replied by saying that a householder shall do sacrifices to satisfy God, study vedas to please rishis and beget sons to propitiate pitrus. One that swerves from

these falls. Vasudeva pleased the rishis and pitrus and owed a debt to Gods and that was to be cleared by becoming an ascetic.

Vasudeva with his eighteen noble wives preformed a sacrifice of huge magnitude according to the rules laid down in hoary lore, in the inspiring presence and priesthood of sages and the divine patronage of Balarama and Krishna. The sages took leave of Sri Krishna praising Him and departed after the conclusion of the sacrifice.

Nanda and other Gopas were uniformly honoured by Ugrasena, Balarama, Krishna and others and therefore remained there with them. Vasudeva expressed his gratitude for the enormous affection

At last Nanda and other Gopas returned to Mathura. Also the Kuru kings returned from Syamanthapanchaka after three months of pious residence. Kunti Devi and the Pandavas took leave of Krishna and returned to Indraprastha. The Vrishnis returned to Dwaraka. Thus the august pilgrimage concluded.

Krishna shows to Devaki her dead children.

Vasudeva and Devaki praised Balarama and Krishna realising that they were Anantha and Vishnu respectively and that they were just sporting on earth for the benefit of the mankind. Devaki entreated them to show her earlier and dead sons remembering that they brought back to life the dead son of their preceptor Sandipini.

The divine brothers entered Sutali and enjoyed all respect and worship from Bali (Indrasena). Krishna said: "The six sons of Marichi by Varsha who laughed at Brahma approaching his own daughter went down as 'asuras' and sons of Hiranyakasipu and these were transmitted by 'yoga maya' as the sons of Devaki Devi. Kamsa destroyed them and they are now with you. I shall take them to my mother and thence emancipate them. They thus will realise their original status."

Devaki saw her sons and felt the urge
Of mother and embraced the six and smelt
Their scalps; and delud'd divine she put

Each one to breast and fed each with nectar sweet
That was behind when Sri Krishna was wean'd !
The brothers were transformed to their forms true
By touch of Sri Krishna and soared into
The sky ! The mother saw the change and knew
It to be sport divine of Him supreme, superb !

Arjuna carries away Subhadra.

Balarama proposed Subhadra fair
To Duryodhana strong, and this Arjuna heard ;
And then deciding to wed her himself,
Went in the guise of an ascetic mild
To Daraka and moved from home to home !
Balarama invit'd the hermit false
To palace for a dinner when he saw
Subhadra sweet in smiles and set his soul
On her, and arrows of love stung him sharp !

Subhadra saw Arjuna, the youth
Of form and fame, and fell in love with him !
The eyes saw deep ; the hearts met quick ; and thus
The lovers vowed to meet in wedlock soon !

In chariot went Subhadra to shrine
For worship out of Dwaraka and then
Arjuna sought permission of Krishna
And wend'd to temple where Subhadra went !
The bride with lustre of moon full and bright
And marching as deer, young with eyes of grace,
And shining lightning like away from clouds,
Was like a doll of gold set with gems bright !

Arjuna bold held Subhadra by hand
And carried her away in car his own.
As lion gains his open share !

Balarama's ire swelled like sea on day
Of full moon ! Lord Krishna spoke soft and quenched
The anger of His brother who then calm'd
And gave the sister fair things royal, grand,
And presents of gold, jewels, elephants,
And chariots and retinue all rich !

Krishna visits Mithila.

At Mithila ruled a pious king Bahulasva. A devoted brahmin by name Srutadeva also lived in the same place. Both desired to see the Lord at one and the same time.

Krishna went to Mithila with sages Narada, Kanva, Maitreya and others and accepted the hospitality at the same time from either in their respective places and appeased their spiritual thirst.

Sruti Gita.

King Parikshit desired to know how the srutis dealt with Brahman and Sage Suka replied in detail elaborating the discussion on the same subject between Narada and Narayana as a sage at Svetadvipa. Sanandana spoke on the occasion.

Narayana meditates in this kalpa for the welfare of all.

The Lord swallowed His creation and was in sleep. As the court singers wake up the sleeping emperor, the srutis sing of Him to awake Him from His torpor.

O Lord! May Thou show Thy true nature and end Avidya. Thou art the universe. The vedas and sages speak of Thee. The vitue of Thy stories cleanses the sin of men and the world. One realising the SELF does certainly free himself from all that is evil and sinful.

Those in search of Thee only live; those that are not, only breathe like bellows. Thou art in the five sheaths not being any or all of them.

Some contemplate Brahman at navel, some do so and reach the heart; and some others contemplate directly at the heart. From the heart the flight is to the head, the seat of light, from which there is no fall into the mill of births and deaths.

Thou art the same fiery core while in differet forms.

Men realising the self in each being offer everything to Thy feet and achieve release from the mundane cycle.

Those that bathe in the sweet sea of Thy hallowed glory, mingle with other devotees, detaching themselves completely from domestic ties, and reach Thy lotus feet like swans.

Some are unable to use the body to reach Thy feet and get entangled with familial attachments.

The lotus feet are achieved by the sages that meditate sternly, by those thinking of Thee even as an enemy, by the Gopis that loved Thy form exquisite, and by Sesha. Even so may we have Thy lotus feet to which we cling.

Brahma rose from Thy navel and later other gods. How then could humble mortals know the beginning of everything in detail?

Discussion about the genesis of beings and the fruits of karma and the constitution of Purusha, is absurd.

The wise judge that atma is the universe and vice versa.

Those that know Thee as the final resort overcome death and purify themselves and others too.

Under Thy beatific protection the entire cosmos runs its course though many appear to govern the constituent units but they all pay their homage to Thee.

Thy sport with Avidya brings into being various creatures bound by karma.

The creator has control over the created though the latter is unaware of the fact.

As the rivers drain into the sea all the aspects of creation end in Thee.

The fear from family vanishes in those that resort to thy feet; one who does not control the mind is like a merchant in a boat without a check of the rudder.

Life is sour and short. Thought on Thy feet is sweet and permanant. The rishis that meditate on Thee are themselves holy waters and shrines, and contact with them will help renunciation.

The universe is unreal and appears to be based on Thee, the one real existence.

Maya makes 'jiva' court 'avidya' and therefore the attachment to body starts with resultant fall into 'samsara'. But Thou could drive away 'maya'.

Those that pray to Thee without detachement from passions miss Thee even though Thou art at heart. They realise neither freedom from death nor Thee.

One who realises Thee knows no joy or grief, the results of 'karma' operated by thee. Thus the vedas do not bind him as they do one with a body. Those that realise Thee have reached the goal.

Thy vastness is unimaginable and the vedas end in Thee.

Narada heard this great exposition of Atma from Narayana, and reproduced it to Vyasa. I have learnt it from my father Vyasa.

Worship of Vishnu.

Suka spoke to Parikshit:

The worship of Siva gives one the wealth
And pomp on earth: The worship of Vishnu
Takes one to penury, and he gets lost
In world! Forlorn he goes and meets the men
Devot'd to Sri Hari and thus He saves!
Thus few do pray to Lord Hari! Siva
Or Brahma great grant boons too soon and they
Curse those thus help'd when going wrong too soon!
Vrikasura had boon terrific from
Siva whom he pursued with mad desire!
Vishnu soon intercepted and saved Siva!

Bhrigu meets Brahma, Siva and Vishnu.

Bhrigu went to Brahma and stood bent not!
Brahma burnt red with spite and grew calmed soon
To see his son as water quench's the fire!

The sage went next and saw Siva who rose
With arms embracing him! Bhrigu stood off
From brother dear! Siva in anger rose
And dart'd his trident sharp on insolent
Bhrigu but Parvati stood forth and saved!

The sage next went to Vaikunta and kick'd
Vishnu, on lap of Sri, with foot in haste!
Hari came down his bed and offer'd seat

To sage and said : " The touch of thy foot great
Hast done me good and purified my heart ! "

The sage proclaimed supremacy of Lord
Hari to other sages that knew it then !

Dead brahmin boys were restored to life by Krishna.

A brahmin lost nine sons. On each occasion he blamed the king of the country for his misfortune.

Arjuna promised to help the brahmin on the last occasion. He went to the brahmin's house and encaged it with his arrows and safeguarded the house. With all the precautions, a son was born alive but he disappeared into the air. Arjuna went in vain search of the child even through the cities of Yama and others. At this failure, as vowed, Arjuna was preparing to enter fire, but Krishna prevailed upon Arjuna and stopped him from such a rash act.

Krishna and Arjuna then set out to bring the dead children back and alive.

Krishna and Arjuna mount'd chariot
Of gold with horses four of fame and went
Westward and crossed the oceans seven large
And islands seven big, and came to zone
Of darkness dense, when horses failed to see !
The disc of Lord was sent in front to light
The path, and horses famed moved fast as sound !
Arjuna closed his eyes at light of Lord !

The region of Vayu was run and then
The zone of waters blue with swelling waves
Was seen and on it stood a palace great
With thousand columns of gems bright and grand !
In it was seen Ananta, thousand hood'd
And black in necks and tongues, and with Vishnu
Attired in gold and as a cloud of rain
With crown of gems of purest ray and with
The face in smiles hung ov'r by locks of hair
And lit by rings on ears and arms eight long
And kaustubha and garland of flowers rare
And Sri at heart ; The Lord had halo round !
The saints, and guards, and disc strong, and gods

Were waiting at the Lord in prayer deep !
The visitors bowed low to Lord Vishnu
Who said : " You are Nara and Narayana.
You have put end to asuras and saved
The innocent and stood the right in might !
You act'd examples true of perfect lives !
Return to ME as your work ends on earth !
The sons of brahmin were brought to fetch you
To MY abode ! Now go ! return the boys ! "
Krishna and Arjuna took leave of Lord
And came with sons of brahmin sore and wild,
And gave him back his sons in age and form,
And then the joy of brahmin knew no bounds !
Arjuna learnt Krishna as God supreme !

At Dwaraka reigned Sri Krishna, the Lord,
As householder with queens and lived with each !
The Lord had sons ten through each queen chaste !
He killed the wicked ones and saved good ones !
The sacrifices He did were set to teach
The righteous path and truth to men on earth !

SKANDA XI

Krishna with help from Balarama strong
And yadus bold, dissolved daityas on earth !
He saw the discord dire between Pandus
And Kurus mean ! The brahmins cursed Yadus !
The Lord thus eased the burden big on earth !
He left foot prints of His in Brindavan !
His fame was sung in verses sweet by bards !
His form was loved by all in ectasy !
He thus showed world released from ties of life !
He then withdrew to His abode from earth !

Sages visit Krishna.

Viswamitra, Asita, Durvasa, Bhrigu, Kashyapa, Vamadeva, Vasishta, and Narada visited Dwaraka and had an interview with Krishna.

The form of azure hue in saffrom silks
And crown and jewels of gems rare and with

Arms four adorned with conch, with disc, with mace,
And lotus fresh, and with looks that lure
The eyes of Rukmini, His queen at heart,
Was seen by sages who sang His praise profuse!
Krishna is sea of mercy sweet for all!

Sri Krishna honoured the august visitors who then took leave of Him and adjourned to holy Pindaraka. The Yadu youths dressed Samba as a pregnant woman and presented 'her' before the sages with the impertinent question "will she bring forth a boy or girl?". The anger of the hoary ones knew no bounds and then they replied: "Yes. She brings forth a pestle that shall destroy your yadu race!"

The youths regretted and undressed the boy and found inside the clothes an iron pestle, the instrument ordained for their destruction. The thing was presented in court before Krishna with a narration of the incidents leading to its birth. Krishna knew the whole story but said:

Of yadu race, you have eyes blind with pride!
You spoke to sages with slight and earned this curse!
The cure of brahmins hoary and with might
Shall come to work the end of your race soon!

The foolish and haughty men powdered the pestle, all but the core, and distributed it in the sea. The particles of iron were swept back to the shore and gave rise to a kind of grass (Erakas). The iron piece that remained hard was swallowed by a fish which was caught by a fisherman, and he used the piece found inside the gut of the fish to fix it as the tip of his arrow.

Narada speaks to Vasudeva.

Once Narada visited Dwaraka. Vasudeva received him with honour and respect a and requested him to teach the path of 'Moksha'. Narada said: "Your question can be best answered by the narration of the conversation between the son of sage Rishabha and the king of Videhas."

Manu Swayambhuva had a son Priyavrata, who in turn had a son Agnidhara. Agnidhara had a son Nabhi and Nabhi had a son Rishabha.

Rishabha was learned and had also hundred learned sons. The eldest was Bharatha who was Godly-minded and after him is named our land. Nine ruled nine 'dwipas'. Eighty one became learned and wrote on 'karma'. The remaining nine continued as sages and they were Kavi, Hari, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalyana, Avirhotra, Drumila, Chamasa, and Karabhajana and these great souls went round the world as God realised ones.

Once the great nine visited the sacrifice of Nimi, the king of Videhas, who respected them utmost and requested them to advise and initiate him into the path of final beatitude.

Kavi speaks to Nimi.

Devote thyself to His lotus feet,
O King for ev'r! Do dedicate all things
To Him supreme! One going out away
From Him falls into delusion deep and fear!
Be wise and see no difference in things!
Detach'd be thy life and thou may look mad!
Think, hear, sing, talk, and pray all of the Lord!
One who sees Him in all and has his thought
Word, deed, on Him shall reach the lotus feet
Of Lord Hari and that becomes 'Moksha'.

Hari and Antariksha preach to Nimi.

Requested a description of a devotee and maya, Hari spoke:

All those seen form Brahman which is in him,
The votary true, in whom He is with all!
One knowing foes comes next in rank of merit!
One worshipping the pictures of Hari comes last!
There is no pain at heart of true devotee;
Comes light of Moon from nails of His lotus feet,
That fills the worlds all three, it drives the pain!
The heat of sun goes out as moon rises up!
The heart of votary first is tied by cords
Of dedication devout to feet of Lord
Who holds the one fast to His heart in love!
The Lord loves one that prides not on birth, caste,

Or karma, or ashrama ! The ' maya '
Creates, preserves, destroys the universe !

Prabuddha, Pippalyana, and others speak about the over-coming of ' maya ' even by a dull person.

Prabuddha replied to Nimi :

Do follow one preceptor who knows God !
Join souls devot'd ! Be free ! Be kind to all !
Be pure, and talk of God and bear both pain
And pleasure as the same !
Detach'd and humble, live and see Atma
In all around ! Keep to Bhagavatha
But tolerate the other faiths ! Speak truth !
Control thought, word and deed ! Keep thoughts on Him !
Resign wife, children and life ev'n to Him !

Pippalyana spoke about ' karma-yoga ' :

One failing to go as vedas advise
Goes into paths of vice, and births and deaths !
Detach'd in work, resigned to Him one clears
Karma and reaches Moksha, the state supreme !

Drumila described the Avataras :

God made Virat and got into it as
Purusha first ! Worlds three are of the Lord !
He thus creates, preserves, destroys cosmos !
He with Rajas is Brahma, that creates !
He with satva becomes Vishnu for safe
Preservation and with tamas becomes
Rudra for final dissolution strict !
Narayana expound'd Atma and end'd
Karma ! As swan He taught Gnanayoga !
Hayagreeva did good and killed Madhu !
Matsya saved vedas safe ! Varaha lift'd
The earth and killed Hiranyaksha !
Kurma held up the mount ! Hari saved
King of elephants ! The Lord helped rishis pure
And Indra great and damsels of Heaven !
Narasimha tore the asura ! The Lord

Killed daityas mean ! Vamana drove Bali
To Sutala and gave Indra his throne !
Parasurama killed the kings of pride !
Rama, the Lord of Sita, slew Ravana !
Avatara in Yadu race will do
The deeds of glory great ! The Lord will mend
The evil at end of Kaliyuga !

Chamasa spoke about those not devoted to the Lord :

Those that forget Hari will hate the men
That pray to Lord and sing and dance for Him !
Some worship women for their sexual ties !
Some kill animals to eat as food !
Some live for wife and children theirs, and home !
These evil souls die and reach Hell for sin !

Karabhajana advised about the identity of the Lord :

The Lord looks white as Brahmachari in
Krita yuga ! He is known Purusha !.

Tee Lord looks red, has hands four, hair golden
In treta yuga and is known Vishnu !
The Lord is blue with yellow clothes and it
Is Dwapara yuga and is known as
Narayana ! The Lord is black, and it
Is Kali yuga ! worship is by chant
Of His names pure ! The south has rivers great
And drinking water of them clears sin
And thus 'moksha' is obtained by men !

Nimi honoured the nine rishis who then disappeared and he himself attained the goal by following their advice.

Devaki and Vasudeva then realised that Krishna thought to be their child was an avatar ! Thus delusion disappeared from their minds.

Brahma and other Gods invite Krishna back to Vaikunta.

Brahma, Siva, Indra, and lesser gods
Came to Dwaraka with their retinues !
They saw Krishna of beauty exquisite !

They said: "O Lord! Thou hast spent five and six score years
On earth ! come back to Vaikunta with peace !
Thou hast relieved the weight of asuras
On earth and purpose Thine is ov'r by now ! "

Sri Krishna said : Be pleased ! I will return !
The Yadu race shall dwindle now for good ! "

The Vadavas go lo Prabhasa.

Perceiving evil portents Krishna advised the yadava community to adjourn to the holy banks of Prabhasa, and observe austere rites, after bathing, like feeding the learned, and chanting strict prayers. Hearing this the great Uddhava prayed to the Lord for being permitted to be with Him in His abode for ever.

Krishna teaches Uddhava.

The world has seen MY forms to save the earth !
My sport is ov'r and I will reach Heaven !
The yadavas will die of strife in them !
Dwaraka will sink in sea on seventh day,
When I have left for MY own Vaikunta !
Kaliyuga then comes with sin and crime !
Uddhava, my dear, thou shalt stay not
On earth, when I am not here ! The evil rules
With might in days to come ! What thou can see
Is deep 'maya' and shake it out ! In thee
There shall not be distinction wrong of those.
Karma and Akarma ! The univere
Is Atma which is ME, the Lord supreme !
The self in thee is SELF IN ALL THE THINGS !
Act hoping for no good as child ! Get rid
Of attachments familial and be detach'd !.

Uddhava said : " O Lord ! I am Thy servant yet clouded by 'maya'. 'I' and 'Mine' linger in my mind, Show me a path by which I can overcome them and reach Thy lotus feet at once ! "

Sri Krishna said :

The life as man is one chance great, superb !
The yogi sees ME, one containing all !
The man in search of ME sees ME direct

Or through proofs of My achievements here !
The vedas are superfluous and caste
Deludes the one that knows ME not at all !

Krishna narrated then the conversation between a Yadu and Avadhuta (an ascetic) and thus enlightened Uddhava.

The Yadu asked :

O sage, how hast thou reached the light of life ?
Thou art free from the world and like a child !
Thou art Atma the absolute, supreme !
The Avadhuta replied :

Many have taught me detachment true and pure !
The earth has taught me bear a burden meek !
The hill has taught me to do good to ev'ry one !
The air has taught detachment while with all !
The sky has taught Atma pervades all things !
The water has taught me to turn all pure !
The fire has made me eat and cleanse all things ! '
Moon shows that births and deaths touch not Atma !
Sun shows Atma to be free from all changes !
The pigeon shows close ties do end in grief !
The Ajagara has taught to have His gifts !
The sea shows to contain both joy and grief !
The moth shows not to fall into fire
Of woman fair and deck'd with jewels bright !
The bee shows to eat less and leave the home !
Suck good from books like bee at flowers fresh !
Do not lay by like bees for days to come !
An elephant shows not to go to maid
Of youth and beauty sweet, as chains are there !
One who collects the honey from the hives
Has taught the fate of wealth of misers mean !
The deer has taught that music lays a snare !
The fish has taught not to go near a bait !
Pingala, public woman, disappoint'd
By paramours got soon detached with joy !
The woman has taught me joy is from Him !
The Kurara gave up its meat and freed
From birds of strength and thus I will give up
My own for benefit of other men !

The child shows happy life as in Atma!
The bride with bangles fair shows to be one
And one away from all and in Atma!
The archer shows to fix mind on Atma!
The serpent shows that mortal needs no home!
The spider shows that God brings forth and eats
The cosmic web as part of His Maya!
The wasp shows that thought deep transforms the shape!
The body has taught me to be detached!
The body is reared like tree in growth and both
Do die, each one with seed for future form!
The senses drag the body out of path!
Brahma created the living forms of which
The man alone can think wise of Atma!
The life, as man, supreme is meant for light!

After this spiritual lesson the King bowed to him and the Avadhuta went his way. The king became detached and realised Atma.

Uddhava asked: "What is a devotee? What is fruitful devotion? What type is esteemed?"

Sri Krishna replied: The devotee is kind, pious, and poor; has no desires; and is in ME and appears inert. He is free from carnal cravings, but learned, He sings about ME and follows those knowing ME and resigns himself to ME. He helps all those in quest of ME. Every element of the cosmos is MY temple. Recitation of the vedas, offerings at the sacrificial fire hospitality to a learned brahmin and feeding a cow form aspects of MY worship Contemplate on ME with four arms holding conch, disc, mace and lotus. Suka, Sanaka, Ambarisha, Vibhishana and Rukmangada realised ME through devotion. In My absence the Gopi women thought of ME in devotion and realised ME. No enormous offerings are needed to please ME. Associations with the good and righteous will help to reach ME. Men, women, beasts, cows, serpents and trees realised ME, as the rivers end ultimately in the ocean.

Uddhava asked: How did great sages Sanaka and Sananda learn the yoga?

Sri Krishna replied: The interaction between mind and gunas was explained by ME as a swan. Brahma and other

gods learnt the same on the occasion. If the SELF is kept aloof from mind and objects, then the doubt ceases.

Fix in ME and get over the states of mind. Get rid of 'I' consciousness.

The varna ashramas, swarga and other destinations, and karma are unreal, while Atma in one reality and controls the senses. Kill Ahamkara by wisdom and learning.

The universe is delusion. (MAYA).

Get away from the world and realise the self.

The body allows karma to exhaust. One knowing the self cares not for the body.

Uddhava asked : Be pleased to describe meditation.

Sri Krishna replied : Sit at peace and paractise 'Pranayama'. Meditate on the lotus of the heart.

Vibhutis : As I described to the dispirited Arjuna on the battlefield when Pandavas and Kauravas were ready to fight at Kurukshetra, I shall now explain to you. The entire Universe is ME. I am the creator, protector, and destroyer. Vishnu, Sun, Moon, Samaveda, Indra, Mind, Jnana, Sankara, Kubera, Fire, Manu, Brihaspati, Kumaraswami, Sea, Brighu, OM, Japa Yajna, Himalayas, Pippal tree, Narada, Chitraradha, Kapila, Ucchaisrava, Airavata, King amongst men, Vajra weapon, Kama, Vasuki, Ananta, Aryama, Prahlada, Time, Krita yuga, Lion, Garuda, Air, Rama, Makara, Ganga, Atma Vidya, Hanuman, Death, Chastity of women, Brihatsama, Gayatri, Margasira, Vansanta, Gambling techniqur, Victory, Satvika, Vasudeva of Yadus, Arjuna of Pandavas, Vyasa of sages, Sankaracharya of acharyas, Justice, Knowledge; these are of ME. There is nothing without ME.

There are four Varnas, four Ashramas and four Vedas.

The rich person is one that knows ME and My attributes. He has Atma Vidya. The poor man is one bereft af Atma Vidya.

Observance of silence, Brahmacharya, mercy, chanting of His name, meditation, honouring guests, doing good to others are good practices.

Control of mind and desires, equanimity towards friends and foes, instilling knowledge into others, scrifice of kama, equal attitude towards all, association with devotees, purity of thought—all these form real prosperity and true vidya,

Lack of devotion, non-realisation of friends, preceptors, and others, submission to desires (under influence of tamasa), belief in the permanance of body—all these form poverty and Avidya.

King Janaka and others followed karma yoga and reached ME. Prahlada, Bali, Muchukundu reached ME through Bhakti Yoga.

One who worships ME in some form or other with strict rituals will ultimately be able to reach ME. My dear Uddhava! Go to Badarika ashrama and follow Sankhya Yoga and Thou shalt reach ME.

Uddhava bowed his head to Lord Sri Krishna and went to Badarika Ashramam.

Balarama and Krishna go to Vaikunta.

Seeing evil portents Sri Krishna advised the women and children of the yadu race to go to Sankhoddhava and the men to Prabhasa.

The men got intoxicated with a liquor called maireyaka and quarrelled between themselves like wicked persons. The 'maya' of Mukunda deluded them into their own destruction. Relationships and friendships were forgotten to a fatal issue.

Instruments of fight were exhausted and at last the men fought with eraka grass which worked stronger than maces. The yadus died.

Balarama saw the plight of his people and wended His way into Ananta by yogic path.

Sri Krishna adjourned to the shade of an Asvattha tree and was at rest. A hunter called Jara mistook the foot of the Lord for the ear of a deer and aimed an arrow with the iron piece remaining of the accursed pestle. Later the archer went near his aim and saw Sri Krishna and with tears in his eyes said :

O Lord ! Krishna ! I pray, do pardon me
In Thy grace Godly, great, divine, and kind !
I have done sin in aiming Thee whom Gods
Praise, sing and seek for light of life !
Kill me at once ! Save me ! This sin I own !

The Lord said :

" Jara ! fear not ! Thou hast obeyed My will !
Thou shalt go to swarga, the home of gods !
The chariot of heaven took him to sky !

Daruka, charioteer of Sri Krishna
Traced under Asvattha tree Lord of Lords,
In hallow'd glory and with weapons His,
And looks of love to one and all on earth !
He said : " O Lord ! I am in darkness deep !
The light is gone as in night with no moon ! "

The chariot of Sri Vishnu came down
With Garuda on banners gay and drawn
By horses of strength and glow and with it came
The Conch, the disc, the Mace, and lotus sweet !

Sri Krishna said : " O Daruka ! Go home.
Inform about the end of Yadu race ;
Departure of Balarama, the strong ;
AND MY STATE NOW ! Quit Dwaraka ; it sinks !
Go to Indraprastha, and Arjuna
Shall give support to you ! " Daruka bowed !

Sri Krishna closed His lotus-like eyes soft !
Brahma, Siva, Indra, and lesser gods
Stood silent in the sky and flowers rained
From them with songs and prayers deep superb !
The Lord went back to HIS SELF in Vaikunta !
All that is good left earth with HIM TOO SOON !

SKANDA XII

Suka narrated to Parikshit the line of kings after Sri Krishna withdrew Himself into His own. The advent of Kali-yuga began with the ascent of the Lord to heaven. The yuga will be saturated with disorder and sin. Mlechchas will become

the ruling race and lead parasitic existence, and endangering their own subjects.

In the age of Kali a wealthy man becomes everything, and, might rules. Hypocrisy forms basis of business. Carnal considerations decide marriages. A cotton thread on the back becomes the hall mark of a brahmin.

People eat and revel without holy rites or preceptors. A man's capacity is judged by his power to support his family. Love of fame exceeds the purpose of an act.

Peaceful and righteous people will resort to obscurity as the rulers become unjust and cruel to them.

Famine, floods, heat waves and internal fighting will perish communities.

The people will be stunted with disease.

At the end of Kaliyuga, when sin has risen to the zenith, the Lord takes avatar and appears on the earth for the re-establishment of righteousness.

Lord Kalki will be born in the house of Vishnuvyasa, a righteous brahmin of the village of Sambala. He will ride a steed Devadatta, and with sword in hand destroy all wicked souls in every class of society, from prince to peasant, and establish a very just world. Thus Krita yuga (golden age) sets–in and satva predominates in men. At the end of Kali yuga, Devapi and Maru, now waiting in a village called Kalapa, will appeal under His instructions and establish Dharma and preach clearly varnas and ashramas.

Krita, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali yugas run in orderly rotation.

The so-called kings of Kali yuga know their own bodies only and cannot realise Atma or self. They will therefore disappear into dust.

Suka said :

Mother Earth has expressed about kings or other men quarrelling between themselves for the sake of land : " You are tools of destruction. Ignorant you are to think of me and mine. You should realise SELF and not aspire to register a thing called conquest."

Heroes described in epics came and exhibited their attachment to Earth and also disappeared in course of time. Their names remain in stories today.

Accounts or narratives or stories of His name and sport alone are worth while hearing and remembering.

King Parikshit asked :

How could people overcome evils in Kaliyuga? Kindly enlighten me about the yugas, the deluge and the ways of the Lord.

Sage Suka replied :

In Kritayuga (golden age) Dharma stands stable on four feet and people are ideally good (satvic) and realise Atma. In Tretayuga Dharma is threefoot strong and people follow vedic rites (Rajasic) and pursue Dharma Artha and Kama. Brahmin is regarded as the highest order. In Dvaparayuga Dharma has declined by half. Men do acts for fame (Rajasic and tamasic) and Brahmins and Kshatryas come to top ranks. In Kaliyuga Dharma has declined by threefourth. A quarter of the population may support Dharma. People are cruel and mean and go after carnal cravings; tamasic in nature. Men become voluptuous and women unchaste. Undeserving men become powerful and begin to rule the land. The periods of training in a person are not righteously adhered to. Famine, floods, and disease rage virulently. Murders become frequent, as also ungrateful children. God will become a forgotten thing.

Singing the name of Krishna is a penacea for all the evils of Kaliyuga and this method of worship shall elevate even a sinner to His lotus feet. One day of Brahma is four thousand yugas. It is also a Kalpa during which fourteen Manus rule. A night of Brahma is a similar period, and it is during this period (pralaya of Bhu, Bhuvar; and Suvar) dissolution occurs.

Pralaya is fourfold–Nitya: Naimittika; Prakritika; and Atyantika.

The end of King Parikshit.

Sage Suka said to King Parikshit :

O King! Do not have any fear of impending death. The soul dies not, like fire that is apart from fuel. The soul or

Atma has neither birth nor death which are conceptions of the mind.

The human existence is best compared to a lamp with a burning wick.

Realise the supreme Brahman in thee and thou art Brahman too, and thou shalt not have any concern about body and much less any fear from Takshaka. Fix thy-elf on the supreme Self.

King Parikshit bowed to the great sage and said with reverence: "No fear of Takshaka exists in me as I am already in Parabrahmam. Please permit me to observe silence and meditate on the supreme Lord as light has dawned in me driving awey darkness or nescience."

Suka and other sages departed.

King Parikshit sat on the banks of the Ganga and went into meditation fixing his mind on Paramatma.

Takshaka started on his destined mission of biting the king, and on the way bribed Kasyapa, a Brahmin, capable of curing serpent bites, and sent him away. He went in the guise of a brahmin; and gave a fruit to be presented to the king. Receiving the fruit, the king was smelling it. Out of it came Takshaka, who bit the king according to the curse of Sringi. Immediately the saintly king turned into ashes on account of the viper venom.

Janamejaya.

Janamejaya heard that his father was bitten and killed by Takshaka: and in anger performed a sacrifice driving into the fire all vipers. Takshaka went to Indra for help at the crisis.

Many serpants fell into the fire and died. Seeing the escape of Takshaka, the king requested the priests to drag down Indra and his venomous refugee into the sacrificial fire. They did the same. The prospective victims were sighted. Angirasa intervened then and advised the enraged king: "The death of a man by either fire or water or accident or a serpent bite is the fruit of karma. Takshaka has to escape because he has had ambrosia and thus rendered himself free from death or debility. Stop this sacrifice as already many innocent serpents have been

burnt." King Janamejaya worshipped the sacred priest and accepted the sage advice and stopped the rigorous sacrifice of the Nagas.

The Vedas.

Brahma created the four Vedas through his four faces, and taught them to his sons who handed them down to their disciples. The vedas were rearranged by the learned ones at Dwapara.

The son of Satyavati and Parasara classified the vedas as Rig, Atharva, Yajus, and Saman and formed four samhitas.

Markandeya.

Suta narrated to Saunaka the great story of Markandeya who alone outlived the Pralaya (deluge) and saw the supreme person as a baby lying on a banyan leaf.

Markandeya was intiated Brahmachari and became learned in vedas and accustomed to tapas. He led the purest life and lived like a mendicant. Worshipping Hari for a million years he overcame death.

The period of six Manvantaras passed away. Indra grew jealous of the sage and tried his best to tempt him by sending celestial damsels and Manmatha to disturb the extraordinary sage.

The sage was doing penance in a hermitage on the slopes of the Himalayas with picturesque surroundings which reflected the most charming benedictions of nature.

The tempting team of Indra returned home defeated.

Sri Hari appearred as Nara and Narayana before the sage, who bowed down at the darshan. The sage praised the two forms of the Lord supreme. The Lord said: "I am pleased with thee for thy unequalled and austere peanance. Choose a boon!"

Markandeya uttered: "O Lord! I see Thy lotus feet and I am satisfied. Be pleased to show me Thy MAYA!"

The Lord said: "yes. It shall be done!" and disappeared.

On the banks of the Pushpabhadra the sage was sitting one evening. He saw an enormous cyclonic storm raging. The seas overflowed and were submerging the earth.

The waves of the ocean rose up high into the sky and set up a terrifying roar. Lightning, thunder-and torrential rain followed.

The universe sank leaving only the sage as a solitary survivor, who had to wander with hunger, thirst, and danger from aquatic animals. Millions of years rolled in this delusion.

At last he saw a banyan tree on an elevated point of the earth. On one leaf was lying an infant with hallowed lustre and of azure hue and of lovely features. The child took hold of his own foot and suckled it himself. The sage approached the baby who at once inhaled him and inside Him the entire universe became visible. His own hermitage was also visible. Further the baby himself floating on a banyan leaf was seen and at this he desired to embrace the Lord. Then the miraculous scene cleared and the original state returned leaving him at the banks of the holy river as in the beginning.

The sage was observed by Siva and His consort Parvati. Siva went into the sage by yogic power and then alone the sage recognised the Lord and His Consort before his eyes. Siva blessed him with freedom from disease or death and also with the authorship of divine lore.

